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■ Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut:
The Philosophies of '68

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Partisan Review 3

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Intellectuals, Academics, and Politics

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On Salman Rushdie

Edith Kurzweil
Peter Gay's Freud

Henry McDonald
Henry James as Nietzschean

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Letter from Eastern Europe

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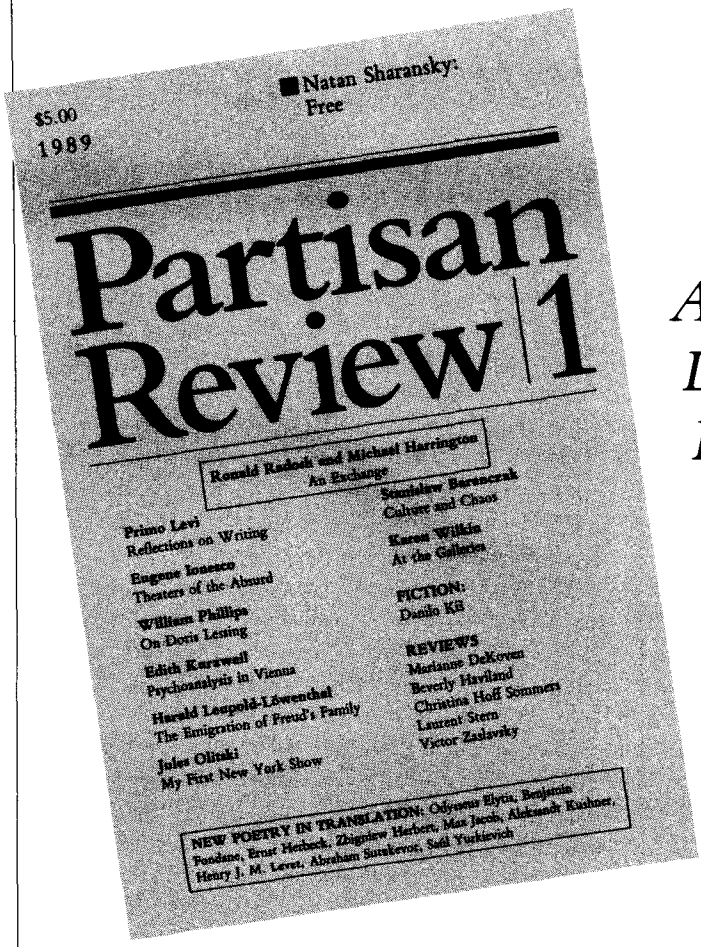

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COMMENT

INTELLECTUALS, ACADEMICS, AND POLITICS

Paul Johnson has written several interesting books, but his latest, *The Intellectuals,* is not one of them. Its thesis, that intellectuals are not noted for their thinking, is arbitrarily and erratically documented. But by simply raising the question, Johnson has brought up an important issue, namely the contradiction between the fact that the intellectual heritage of Western civilization has been created by the intellectuals and the fact that in many respects the intellectuals have been heavily prejudiced and manifestly wrong.

To make his case, Johnson has picked twelve figures at random, for no more apparent reason than that they illustrate his point, all of them being easy targets, of course, of a moral and intellectual criticism. The twelve subjects are: Rousseau, Shelley, Marx, Ibsen, Tolstoy, Hemingway, Brecht, Russell, Sartre, Wilson, Gollancz, and Hellman. Aside from the fact that they are notable for their mistakes as well as their achievements, Johnson goes in for lengthy exposés of their sex lives, their drinking habits—all the shabby aspects of their personal lives, irrelevant to the value of their ideas or their writings. Moreover, most of the examples Johnson has selected are writers not theoreticians: to do a real job, he would have had to examine thinkers like Aristotle, Spinoza, Augustine, Locke, Toqueville, Kant, Isaiah Berlin, Lionel Trilling, Orwell, etcetera.

Although Johnson has taken the easy way, there is still the question posed by the contradiction between the role of the intellectuals in the advance of Western civilization and the extent to which they have been mistaken and have yielded to ideological fashions and prejudices. We have only to cite the examples of the encyclopedists who failed to envision some of the consequences

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of their thinking and were anti-Semitic to boot, or the more recent support of Hitler and Stalin by a number of intellectuals.

How do we resolve this contradiction? Arthur Koestler, in a piece on the intelligentsia, cites the 1934 Edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary*'s definition of the intelligentsia as being those who aspire to think objectively. Koestler approved of this definition, but went on to call attention to its violation by intellectuals, particularly in recent history. In other words, they aspire to think independently but do not always succeed.

Perhaps the only resolution of the problem is that they are influenced by the major social forces of their time, and hence they absorb some of the most retrograde as well as the most cogent and advanced ideas. As Orwell once said that there is a certain kind of nonsense one can learn only in college, we might conclude that there are certain mistakes only intellectuals can make. Let us say that their mistakes are on a higher level. But then who is to decide that mistakes have been made? Perhaps only the best of the intellectuals, the superintellectuals.

* * *

It was a shock to see in *Critical Inquiry* (Spring 1989), that journal of staid, abstruse literary criticism, Edward A. Said's rough attacks on Israel and on three professors who argued with him which sounded more like the work of a street fighter than a scholar. I have not agreed with Said's deconstructionist and Marxist thinking, but to my knowledge, in his literary and cultural criticism Said usually has followed the rules and courtesies of academic discourse. Yet apparently here he is acting in his other, political role, that of a Palestinian spokesman—indeed, as I understand, a member of the PLO Central Committee. As for the content of Said's comments, most of it is the familiar anti-Israel position, but it is argued with more subtlety and adroitness than usual. The gist of his argument is: that Israel has no historical claim to its territory; that the Holocaust is no justification for oppressing the Palestinians; that the occupation is brutally enforced; that Israel is a colonial power; that the Palestinians are fighting a just anticolonial struggle, and so on.

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Said does not mention Israel's security needs; or the fact that the entire Arab world is bent on the destruction of Israel; or that the Arab countries have used and have not helped the Palestinians; or that they were sent out of Egypt, Morocco, and elsewhere without compensation; or that the Jews now have nowhere to go if they lose their homeland.

But it is not so much the matter as the manner of Said's argument that is surprising. The three academics who disagree with Said are polite, respectful, almost deferential. And they go to some lengths to indicate that they are not hawks and that they agree with Said in some respects. Yet Said assaults them with abuse and savage irony. Here are some examples: "His response to me is therefore the verbal equivalent to the Israeli occupation, an equivalent whose specious arguments and time-wasting verbosity cover up the shameless killing and oppression of Palestinians." And: "...he should... keep decently silent until (if he is a human being)...or if he is (as I suspect) a political invention, dissolves himself as an enterprise and announces his withdrawal from a discussion he has degraded." And: "...even a mediocre eighteenth-century specialist such as he will understand me." And: "...he has neither the wit nor the moral courage..." And: "...the massive ravings of ... incoherent pages."

Now, it is natural that as a Palestinian, Said should express a Palestinian view. But one would expect of a sophisticated writer, trained to see different sides of a question, that he would at least be aware of Israel's difficulties in trying to balance the need for survival with the moral problems connected with the occupation.

One has to wonder why Said is so vituperative. Could it be that his anger breaks into his prose? Or perhaps he is high on a sense of power, because his viewpoint has had such wide acceptance. As Robert Griffin writes in the same issue, "...the fact that the editors [of *Critical Inquiry*] up until now received no responses to Said [to his original piece] carries special significance. It signals, or can be read as signaling, that the literary and critical establishment has reached a consensus and that liberal supporters of Israel in our discipline have retreated from the field."

* * *

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Doris Lessing's communication in this issue is one of the few public statements about the Rushdie affair that is independent and balanced—one that separates the issues of literary criticism from the methods of censorship. I myself think that *The Satanic Verses* is not Rushdie's best book. It is lush, overwritten, speciously lyrical, too long, and ultimately boring. That most writers did not separate the faults of the book from the cause of intellectual freedom may be because there has been a dearth of new causes lately, and people starved for a cause seem to have rushed into this one without making the proper distinctions. Diana Trilling, I should add, is also one of the few writers who kept the two issues apart.

* * *

Barbara Herrnstein Smith's credentials would appear to be impeccable. She is a member of the famed English department at Duke University, and she is a past president of the Modern Language Association. In addition, her recent book, *Contingencies of Value: Alternative Perspectives for Critical Theory*, has been approved by such public figures as Frank Kermode, Pierre Bourdieu, Catherine Stimpson, and Michael Walzer, though I suspect they liked her philosophical speculations rather than her literary theories. In any case, my own reading of Smith is more critical: in some sense her view of literature comes close, in my opinion, to a *reductio ad absurdum* of deconstructionist theory.

Smith's book is essentially a disquisition on the idea of relativity, which she claims applies to the judgment of literary works. And in discussing the nature of what she calls "the contingencies of value," she argues that judgment involves the "value" of a literary work. (Her philosophic analysis of the meaning of value I shall leave to philosophers, though I should note that her entire argument is questionable. For though we know that many judgments and values are not absolute, this does not mean that they are endlessly variable and relative, as Smith seems to believe.)

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On the subject of literature, Smith remarks correctly that most of the new literary theorists have been so absorbed in the problems of hermeneutics that they have neglected the question of judgment. However, she goes on to argue, somewhat repetitiously, that literary judgments are judgments of value and they are all endlessly variable and contingent. She starts out by describing rather innocently how her judgment of Shakespeare's *Sonnets* and her interpretations of them have varied over the years, depending on her changing feelings about life, about herself, her changing situations, and her different readings of the *Sonnets.* This is by way of a personal prologue to the more abstract consideration of the theoretical issues. But it seems to be little more than an autobiographical statement, and proves simply that Smith's responses to the sonnets changed over the course of her personal and professional life. It has nothing to do with the quality of the *Sonnets* or the reasons for the continued appreciation of that quality, unless one makes the patently false assumption that the quality of literary works is somehow determined by the totality of everyone's response to them.

On the larger question of value, Smith similarly defines it functionally, assigning a value to a work of literature as though it were an object, like any other, say, like a chair or a toothbrush. And this conception of value, which is essentially that of use-value, comes from the idea that literature's "function," as she puts it, is to satisfy somehow people's needs. She underscores this notion of value and of function by stressing that literature serves a community and that it is judged by the value of this service to the community. The community is never defined, and Smith occasionally speaks of several communities. But she mostly seems to have in mind the academic community, which she appears to believe determines the value of art and literary works. And in this respect Smith is reflecting the current view of how the curriculum is to be revised by academic theorists and interest groups.

Now, what is wrong with this solution to the problem of literary judgment? In my opinion, Smith's entire approach is incorrect. As the positivists would say, she gets the wrong answers because she asks the wrong questions. As a result, her special theory of contingency and variability perhaps can explain personal differences, but it does not provide the slightest clue to the

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continuities over the years and centuries of literary appraisal, though she makes a few casual remarks about continuity as representing some kind of consensus. But, given her general opinions, it is not clear what kind of consensus she could have in mind—a consensus of academics, of readers, of ordinary people?

Smith commits, then, three basic errors: she misconceives the nature of literary esthetic quality, by giving it a functional, communal value; she makes of relativism an absolute, instead of seeing it as a relative relativism; and she inflates the academy by assigning it the role of deciding the quality (not the value) of works of art. I suspect that many teachers do not understand how works of art are judged and who does the judging, for I have noticed that many students think in terms of a much-simplified version of Smith's academic theory.

How then are works of art and literature judged and how do they survive for centuries? This task is indeed performed by a community—a community with continuity—but it is a community of writers and professional critics, not academic theorists or activists. Who, if we accept Smith's notion, were the academics in the fourteenth, fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries who supposedly established the hierarchy that has come down to us? In other words, it is the professionals—as it is in every other endeavor—who are influenced by and perpetuate the works that we think of as making up the tradition. If we understand this, we can understand the nature of the agreements and the differences that make up the continuous consensus.

W.P.

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Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut

THE PHILOSOPHIES OF '68

Two aspects of French philosophy during the 1960s are noteworthy today. Beneath their evident diversity, the philosophical and intellectual currents of that period revolved around certain grand themes and common approaches that allow us to characterize what might be called the "School of '68" – and not just for historical reasons. Despite the divisions and polemics between the neo-Marxism of the Althusserians, the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu, the Nietzschean-Heideggerianism shared by Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, and J. F. Lyotard, or the neo-Freudianism of Jacques Lacan's school, these approaches shared a common intellectual framework that was fused with the cultural leftism of the late 1960s. And if these authors' works have exercised a real influence on recent intellectual life despite their being misunderstood (indeed, in certain cases, unread), this is all the more reason to examine their shared assumptions rather than remarking what distinguishes them.

Second, we must note the difficulties in which these philosophies find themselves today. In a certain sense, at least in France, they had already begun to fall out of fashion during the 1970s, as two quite different developments came together. The first was the dramatic change in the intellectual climate following the crisis of Marxism (which explains, for example, the almost total disappearance of the Althusserians); the other was the increasing speed with which intellectual fashion began to change. In this regard the work of Foucault has proved the most durable, in part because he claimed that his thought had undergone a profound transformation. Still, it remains the fact that, if these intellectual approaches are today less celebrated than they once were, their retreat took place without their ever being truly, and directly, criticized. Oddly enough, it is only today, when

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one can take distance from them, that certain challenges have begun to appear. These challenges, beyond their simply critical function, also reflect the state of French philosophy today, as one begins to see a new intellectual generation seeking to break with the spirit of the "sixties."

In order to show how this new theoretical work is emerging from a critique of the "School of '68," three characteristic traits of French philosophy from that period should be distinguished. The first is what Paul Ricoeur had named "the attitude of suspicion": that is, the deconstructive will which Foucault (following Nietzsche) called "genealogy" or "archaeology." This approach, which the philosophers of the previous generation (Sartre, for example, or Merleau-Ponty) had always rejected, consists fundamentally in asserting that all conscious discourse is really just a symptom that hides a deeper social or individual unconscious. The task of philosophy is therefore, in some sense, that of the psychoanalysts: to "deconstruct discourse" through an "archaeology" that unveils the underlying *interest* that has been covered over. This attitude of systematic suspicions leads one to believe the subject does not mean what he seems to say, or even what he means to say. He is dispossessed of his own discourse and acts, since by definition he can know neither what he says nor what he does. This also means, as we shall see, that he is not responsible for his own actions, "responsibility" being an illusion that has been dispelled by the discovery of the unconscious.

This "genealogy"—a rather banal idea since Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud—took on a truly remarkable form in the French intellectual life of the 1960s, one that saw its extreme radicalization in Nietzsche's formula that "there are no facts, just interpretations." The principle of this radicalization, which was expressed both by Lacan in his *Ecrits* and by Foucault in *Nietzsche, Marx, Freud,* seemed to be the following. Considering all discourse as a symptom, the psychoanalyst must become an interpreter who tries to restore the hidden truth of that discourse by submitting it to a genealogy. But, since the analyst himself has his own unconscious, the interpretation and discourse that he puts forward are themselves merely a disguised expression of deeper unconscious interests. In short, since there is no neutral discourse, that of the analyst/philosopher must also suffer the same interpretation–and so on, and so on. The result is clear:

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there is no ultimate, absolutely certain truth that may be considered objective fact, only interpretations sustained by surreptitious psychological or social interests (an interest in social distinction, for example, according to Bourdieu).

This reduction of philosophy to genealogical interpretation implies the rejection of the classical idea of truth, which is charged with (at best) naiveté or (at worst) intellectual violence. The traditional concept of truth which is repeatedly challenged by the different currents within the "School of '68" (precisely because of their shared recourse to genealogy) is the notion of correspondence to reality. This notion of correspondence clearly has no place in philosophy if one asserts that there are no facts, only interpretations—interpretations which themselves are neither true nor false, but only the beginning of an infinite regression of interpretations. This dissolution of the traditional ideal of truth helps to explain the extreme importance of the critique of science and of philosophical rationalism during this period, since both treat that original idea of truth as self-evident. In France this double critique of science and philosophical rationalism was supported either in Nietzschean or Heideggerian terms–which are clearly similar, as can be seen if we compare Heidegger's proclamations that "science does not think" or that "reason is the most relentless enemy of thought," with Foucault's acknowledgment that "reason is torture and the subject is its agent." It is not difficult to see how this critique of the idea of truth will produce a radical relativism or historicism, with predictably perverse effects.

A third characteristic of the "School of '68"–its critique of modern humanism—follows directly from its "attitude of suspicion" and its denial of the notion of truth. However, this critique of humanism, while present in all the authors considered here, takes on two different forms that must be distinguished. In its neo-Marxist strand, modern humanism is considered purely and simply as bourgeois (indeed, petit-bourgeois) ideology, in which "the human" is a mask for class differences. Althusser attributed this view explicitly to Marx, calling it "theoretical antihumanism." The Nietzschean-Heideggerian strand, by contrast, sees the birth of modern humanism in the arrival of the Cartesian idea of "the subject," defined by his will to make himself "master and possessor of nature" and by his pretention to render himself and

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nature transparent to consciousness. This alleged double transparence, of man and nature, runs directly up against the objections of the authors being considered here. If all our discourses are mere symptoms, in which neither consciousness nor the *cogito* speaks, but only the "Other" of Heideggerian Being, the project of mastery and transparence through subjectivity is both naive and mistaken. Hence the radical call, recently made by Lyotard, "to render philosophy inhuman."

Without entering into the details of these critiques of humanism, it is nonetheless possible to make two observations. First, we note that in this critique French philosophy managed to bring together two currents of thought, Marxism and Heideggerianism, that had hitherto been thought to be both politically and philosophically opposed. More anxious to borrow seductive ideas than to remain coherent, French philosophers built many strange improbable bridges between these two intellectual traditions in the 1960s, antihumanism being a particularly important one. If one wishes to understand the peculiar style of French philosophy in this period, and its weakness, this development is worth pondering.

Second, because of their militant antihumanism, the philosophers of the "sixties" ran up against certain problems when faced with the best aspects of the modern humanist tradition—"the rights of man," for instance, which were suspected of arising from ideological mystification or metaphysical illusion. Witness the acrobatic attempt of Lyotard, who, in *Le différend*, replaces the embarrassing notion of "the rights of man" with the less metaphysically charged "authority of the infinite." Irony is hardly the correct response to such a remark. One must rather emphasize the difficulty that gave rise to it. Since the beginning of the 1980s the idea of human rights has once again become both theoretically and practically indispensable in the face of totalitarianism, and this idea's resurgence is not unconnected to the eclipse of the most extremely antihumanist strains in the "School of '68," that of Marxism particularly. This return to a humanism of rights explains why certain leading lights of the philosophical generation of the 1960s felt the need to undergo veritable conversions. Thus Foucault, who since 1965 had bandied the famous slogan "the death of man," would find himself, at the end of his life, drawing up a sketch for a new Declaration of

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the Rights of Man. This poses certain thorny problems, not least of coherence. For how can the notion of the rights of man, born in an intellectual and philosophical context in which man was considered a subject responsible for his actions, be reconciled with Heidegger's view that, from now on, "it is no longer man as such who matters" and that one must think "against subjectivity"? This is a serious question that should be posed and developed rigorously, rather than cultivating a patchwork philosophy in typically French style. By taking this question seriously, one is inevitably driven back to a critical rereading of the philosophy of the 1960s.

This sort of critical rereading has recently begun in France, both by sociologists and philosophers. For example, Gilles Lipovetsky, inspired by the work of American sociologists, has written a brilliant essay titled *L'ére du vide* (Gallimard, 1983), which examines the relation between the intellectual movements of the 1960s and the changes in Western societies over the past twenty years. In this light, is there really anything "revolutionary" or "deconstructive" about the philosophy of the "sixties"? Was it really the rupture with existent thought and reality that it pretended to be? Or was it not rather accompanied by social changes already at work, changes marked by the rise of liberal individualism and of a consumer society that the "School of '68" seemed to denounce absolutely? In the West today it might seem that the decade of the 1980s, with its ethos of private self-fulfillment, is completely opposed to the collective values concerning the family, business, and work that grew out of the "reevaluation of values" begun in 1968. But one wonders: was this rupture just a surface phenomenon? Lipovetsky's hypothesis, borrowed from Daniel Bell, is that this confrontation with liberal individualism did nothing more than give birth to a hyperindividualism perfectly reconcilable with existing social life. All that remains in order to support this hypothesis is to uncover the logic of what has, until now, just been presented as a provocative paradox. We have attempted this in our essay, '68-'86: *Itineraires de l'individu* (Gallimard, 1987).

It is sufficient here to sketch out this logic on the intellectual plane by considering the cultural effects of this radical critique that was repeated, *ad nauseum*, in the different philosophical currents of the 1960s. Consider, for example, the manner in which

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Bourdieu's works took apart the educational establishment and its systems of norms and standards, revealing it to be a pure and simple instrument for reproducing social hierarchy. Of course, it would be foolish to deny that this sort of analysis reveals nothing about the real functioning of the school system. We must simply note that by reducing education to the imposition of norms and standards—to nothing more than this reproductive function—one has also brought into question the very idea of norms and standards. Yet norms and standards, for better or worse, define a common language and culture. In other words, by denying any truth to norms *as such*, by equating standards *as such* with the repression of differences, this approach came to place exclusive value on individual authenticity, on what Foucault called "the culture of self-concern."

The critique of the idea of truth as intrinsically tyrannical led, in the same way, to a complete relativism that can be summed up in the formula, "Each to his own truth." This path, although certainly agreeable in its resistance to dogmatism, led to the perverse conviction that all opinions are equal and that the most important thing for an individual is not to reach the truth, but to "express himself." From there the drift to the hyperindividualism of the 1980s appears quite logical. In the name of criticizing the oppressive norms of capitalist society or Western rationality, one thereby strengthened the individualistic values that limited those very norms. Far from having subverted the foundations of Western civilization, the philosophers of the 1960s in this sense did nothing more than reinforce the consumer society. They were the unwitting agents of an individualist and liberal revolution–a nonviolent revolution that fizzled out in May of 1968 as soon as the gas stations reopened and everyone could leave Paris for the weekend.

If the "School of '68" can now be seen in the context of liberal society's own evolution, this continuity must inform a critical reading of the School's thought. One type of criticism permits us simply to denounce the blindness and obscurity of a project that, believing itself to have opened a breach in intellectual and social history, in reality did nothing more than contribute to the logic of individualism—a logic that, as Tocqueville showed, has been at work in modernity since its birth. But instead of just contributing to the reinforcement of this individualism, the School

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might have raised more profound questions about the desertion of the political, the atomization of social life, and the end of common reference to universal, agreed upon norms. If one recognizes that the destruction of "the public space" and the extinction of republican values in favor of "self-concern" are challenges to democracy today, one must conclude that by refusing to "think what it is" (and "what it is" is modern individualism), French philosophy in the 1960s was a failure.

A second type of critique, more properly philosophical, is rooted in a reevaluation of the idea of the subject. This critique began in Germany in the works of Jürgen Habermas and Karl-Otto Apel, but it is also beginning in France. To understand it we must return to the idea of "genealogy" and consider its effects. If one considers all discourse to be a symptom of a deeper unconscious (psychological, social, even ontological), one will be less concerned with assessing the truth of what is said than in making out the identity of the "hidden" spokesman. In short, it will be less important to pay attention to *what* someone says than to determine *who* he is, in order to know what he is really saying. One can imagine what strange idea of intellectual debate flows from this presupposition. The content of speech will be replaced by the person speaking and the determination of "where he's coming from." Once the "real motives," unacknowledged and unacknowledgeable by the speaker, have been uncovered, the genealogy then threatens to legitimize a disturbing brand of intellectual terrorism. As Foucault himself did not hesitate to acknowledge, "From now on interpretation will always be interpretation by means of the question, *who*? One will not ask what there is in the thing signified, but essentially one will ask: who has put the interpretation forward?" This is a detective's conception of dialogue that becomes an interrogation, whose aim is not to discuss a topic, but to grill an author in order to know with whom one is dealing.

If this account of genealogy's effects seems somewhat exaggerated, we need only examine two examples of the now "incriminated" practice. In his 1968 lecture *Lenin and Philosophy*, Althusser asserted, "Professors of philosophy are professors. That is, they are intellectuals employed in a given educational system, subjected to that system, and exercising as a group a social function, which is to inculcate the values of the dominant ideol-

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ogy....Philosophers are intellectuals, therefore they are petit-bourgeois men subjected as a group to bourgeois and petit-bourgeois ideology." Thus, what a philosopher tries to say does not matter, and it is useless to listen to him, since it is only bourgeois ideology speaking through him. He is condemned in advance since, whatever he might say in his defense, he remains a petit-bourgeois philosopher-intellectual. He should just shut up. Althusser, moving from theory to practice, then borrows Lenin's formula for philosophy's future: "May a good wind take the bastards! May the Party rid us of this petit-bourgeois garbage!" What remnant of intellectual debate–and, more generally, of human rights–remains when one reduces a man to a thing, to his mere social function? And, given the logic of genealogy, how does Althusser himself (a petit-bourgeois philosopher-intellectual) manage to achieve an autonomy of thought that he denies to everyone else? In this studied incapacity to apply to oneself the logic of one's own position, we see a stupefying absence of self-reflection. Quite beyond its potential for intellectual terror, this incapacity also reveals the profound weakness of the case against "the subject."

A second example reveals perhaps more strikingly the aberrations induced by the genealogical destruction of subjectivity. In *L'economie libidinale,* Lyotard devotes a few pages to an analysis of the masturbatory writer, for the doubtlessly subtle reason that if all writing is sublimation, and writing gives oneself pleasure, writing must just be symbolic masturbation. "What was Marx doing with his left hand while he was writing *Capital*?" Lyotard asks. What is really unacceptable here is not the timidly audacious desanctification of intellectual labor, nor the boring notion of intellectual masturbation. What is really striking is the level to which the systematic practice of genealogy was able to reduce French philosophy, to the point that it became blind to what can be called only its own idiocy.

We are not out to condemn *a priori* every form of genealogy. It is perfectly clear that, just as certain acts can be interpreted as the products of unconscious mechanism, so certain ideological discourses can be ascribed to their social or psychological "conditions of production." But must one extend this practice to the point that the assertion of liberty of opinion as an inalienable human right, for example, comes to have the same status as a

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psychoanalytic lapsus–that is, as a disguised form of repression? The systematic and dogmatic practice of genealogy, as this caricatural passage from Lyotard suggests, eventually drives one to deny a *qualitative* difference between these two "discourses" that we feel exists. We are confident that this difference will seem more apparent only if it examined philosophically, if we seek out the conditions under which certain acts or discourses can be subject to genealogical analysis, and under which conditions they should be treated in terms of liberty and autonomy. This is possible only if we consider their authors, not simply as tortured mechanisms, but also in a certain sense as subjects, as sources of their own actions who deserve treatment, in Kant's words, "as ends in themselves, and not as means only."

At the end of these various French trials of "the subject" during the 1960s, we must now pose a question never really confronted before by philosophy: how are we to conceive of "the subject" while taking account of the discovery of the unconscious? This reconsideration need not take place, as some of our critics have charged, through a "restoration," or a return to the "narcissism of consciousness," or the "exorbitant use of the *cogito*," or the fantasy of a "complete, or at least not structurally dissociated, subject." In demonstrating the diversity of social and psychological influences on man, the social sciences have legitimately cast doubt on the traditional idea of consciousness which philosophy had for so long turned to good use. The Cartesian *cogito* cannot be resuscitated, nor can we any longer consider all our opinions, choices, and decisions as products of an autonomous and sovereign "noumenal subject" taking itself to be outside history. The point is simply this: since everyone will agree that the different discoveries of the unconscious cannot nor should not drive us to a ruinous renouncement of the *ideal* of autonomy, what sort of subject corresponds to this radically new situation? The most grievous error committed by recent French philosophy was to believe, with an incredible naiveté, that after the social sciences' discovery of the unconscious sciences, philosophy could go one better only by finishing off the defunct subject, instead of taking on the new and unavoidable task of thinking afresh.

Translated from the French by Mark Lilla

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Cleve Gray

SEDUCTION AND BETRAYAL IN CONTEMPORARY ART

The ancient Greeks didn't have any Muses to represent the visual arts. They had Muses for poetry, dance, comedy, tragedy, music, history, astronomy, but none for the visual arts. This was because painters, sculptors, architects were regarded as mere craftsmen, artisans with no spiritual intimations. The artist's work, his skill, was praised, but the artist as maker was considered to be too coarse a being to be an honored citizen, not to speak of being worth the protection of a goddess. It is said that Socrates's father was a sculptor and tried to train his son in that profession; but the future philosopher scorned labor that could convey, at best, only a representation of the physical world. And we all recall Plato's rather contemptuous references to drawing and painting. It is clear that the source of this ancient disdain was not only philosophical but also social. In very late classical times a few visual artists were accepted into the upper levels of society and were spoken of as inspired by the Muses, but, on the whole, painters and sculptors were seen as vulgar artisans and tradesmen. It's tantalizing to speculate that the Greeks, who almost 3,000 years ago conceived just about all of the archetypes of our communal psyche, may have sensed how particularly vulnerable the visual arts are to corruption.

Many centuries would pass before the artist whose occupation was considered to be disreputable would be glorified. It's not my purpose to give an account of the changing social position of the artist over the past centuries. For that I can refer you to Wittkower's fascinating book, *Born Under Saturn.* I will not consider further artists of the distant past here except to tell you that by the middle of the fifteenth century, Cennino Cennini asked artists to pray before beginning to paint: "Begin," he said, "by adorning yourselves with these vestments, love, reverence, obedience, and perseverence." And the great architect, Alberti, was

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calling painting "the highest of the arts," and saying, "It contains a divine force." It was at the time of the Renaissance that painting, sculpture, architecture were allowed into the pantheon of the liberal arts. But three hundred years had yet to pass before the painter himself achieved the romanticized status which he was accorded in the nineteenth century. By the end of that century artists accepted those hard-won gains as gifts from their Muse, and my intentions are simply to remind you of the long road to those gains. But young artists today don't relate to the concept of an inspiring and protecting muse; indeed, one of the striking aspects of the contemporary art scene is the enormous arrogance of the successful, contemporary young painters and sculptors emboldened by quickly acquired praise. A prominent young artist is quoted in a Saatchi Collection catalogue as saying: "I'm just kicking the great big, corpulent, cellulitic body of art as it lies there in its deathbed."

This attitude marks a new aesthetic conception. The artists of the Orient, for example, believed that the source of their art came, after long meditation, from beyond the self. The Chinese approach to art was essentially pantheistic. The Greek approach, on the other hand, was anthropomorphic. But both recognized a source of inspiration beyond the self and actively sought it. It's true that Western post-Enlightenment intellectuals were highly secularized and that the avant-garde movement in the arts increasingly drifted over the years towards rational formalism; but one has only to recall the mystical direction of Kandinsky's, Klee's, or Mondrian's writing, for example, to know that belief in transcendent forces survived in a significant part of the avant-garde, however secularized its environment.

To relate these reflections to the 1980s, there is no question that our culture, despite the unusually high percentage of church-goers and spiritual searchers in the United States, is an increasingly temporal and materialistic one. Those with children born after, say, 1960 are aware of the appetites of that generation; the hunger for a quick accumulation of money and material objects, for rapid social position and public recognition. In this decade, the brief idealism of those who came of age in the sixties has disappeared. The joy of working at a task which challenges and enchants is not now a sufficient reward; this generation tends to desire and expect immediate payment in

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hard coin, and lots of it. Granted that living costs are high and that even artists must earn a living, it seems that when artists' thoughts of material gain supersede the enchantment of doing their work, they betray their vocation. I am reminded of a very successful young artist who, after her graduation from a prestigious art school, said to some of her classmates: "I'm going to give this six years, if by then I'm not a success, I'm going to chuck it." Perhaps this was just the bravado of a graduate, but it does seem typical of the cynical conversation and impatience of too many contemporary young artists.

Some art critics, quite a few in fact, readily accept venal motivations as being no more than typical characteristics of our time. Acceptance without discrimination is indeed a key to postmodern thought. It explains the comments of a critic like Carter Ratcliff, writing in the July 1988 issue of *Art in America*, which, incidentally, was almost entirely devoted to the subject of art and money. Ratcliff declared that we are misguided if today we attempt to separate art from money. "Born beyond the clutches of the market," he said, "art must be seduced and prostituted for it to become a fit object for commerce." He does not praise or deplore this seduction, prostitution, and betrayal; he accepts it, declaring that money has now become a part of the esthetic value of art; he seems to imply it has literally become an inherent quality of art like line, form, or color.

The philosopher most representative of the thinking of today's young artists and critics is the French sociologist, Jean Baudrillard. His writing is unintelligibly dense and esoteric, but his views are more clearly summarized in an essay by David Carrier, Professor of Philosophy at the Carnegie-Mellon Institute, which appeared in the September 1988 issue of *Arts Magazine*. Even Carrier finds Baudrillard's writing "maddeningly elliptical," but he does clarify many of Baudrillard's views that are relevant to the discussion of contemporary art. Baudrillard, according to Carrier, believes that although truthful representations were once possible, they can no longer exist, that now there can exist only what he calls "simulacra."A simulacrum is a simulation. "A simulacrum,"Carrier explains, "is a fake which appears fake." We're already acquainted with simulacra which are manifested in aspects of Pop art, Prop art, Conceptual art, Simulation art, Appropriation art, and so on. Baudrillard's statement declaring

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that truth is no longer involved in the artistic process determines his conviction that art has become no more than a medium of economic exchange. And as a further result of this exclusive materialism, art can no longer have any contemplative value; and he insists that artists should make only art that does not demand contemplation. Art, he says, has lost all of its former functions. In many respects, Baudrillard is wrong. But his main error is his belief that art has no use at all, his failure to recognize that art continues to be used universally for political purposes, not to speak of spiritual ones, as well as increasingly to attain social status. At any rate, true or not, Carrier recognizes the profound and widespread effect of Baudrillard's theory upon current visual arts; paraphrasing one of Baudrillard's conclusions, Carrier says, "Art works have become nothing more that consumer goods, and only self-deception permits us to consider that today there can be anything more to art."

Furthermore, Baudrillard says, "The only significant remaining question about art is its role in the system of exchange." Baudrillard doesn't even believe that art satisfies any human need. And since art has no function at all, yet since there nevertheless does exist a market for it, one should learn why and how this market operates. As our media well recognizes, a portion of the public is fascinated with the workings of this market; obviously artists, dealers, collectors, critics, and museums are deeply involved, since these workings have become an independent force, a force which, ironically, has replaced attention to the work of art itself—something like the heat from a firestorm that generates its own winds. So much of the art we are shown today gains its notoriety from what it tells us about the art market; for the art market accepts everything into it, from grocery goods in corrugated cartons to propaganda slogans in flashing lights.

Carrier is far more thorough in his analysis than I can indicate here and does such a fine job of dispersing the fog of Baudrillard's opinions that I feared he might be sympathetic to them. So I was relieved to read his concluding paragraphs which refute Baudrillard's theories: "One man's prescription is another man's nightmare; and, for me, nothing could be more repulsive than an art world which Baudrillard's theory accurately describes."

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To what degree do these degenerated views of art and life offered by Baudrillard reflect the reality of the contemporary art world? Having replaced all traditional esthetic standards by the art market, and having declared that art no longer satisfies any human need, the artists who follow Baudrillard's theory are free to parody, illustrate, simulate, or alter the world in any way they may choose; for, says Baudrillard, "modern art...is exactly an art of collusion vis-à-vis the contemporary world...it never disturbs the [world's] order which is also its own."

What Baudrillard intimates is that with all former sources of authority removed, contemporary artists have acquired a new autonomy and a new impact upon society. And indeed for the first time in history painters not only invent their own images, entirely control the making of their art, but also manage their own merchandising and participation in the art market. It is the extent and force of this new market participation and the artist's impatience for success which is so troublesome. Typical of this impatience is the young artist who, only six months after being taken into one of New York City's most prestigious galleries, announced to the owner that he was leaving; when asked why, he replied it was because the gallery hadn't made him famous yet. The artist has become his own entrepreneur. Why then is the reputation of today's artist so high—he who has entered so deeply into the field of commerce that Baudrillard says the only real interest in his art lies in its role in the art market? Why then is his reputation so exalted as compared, for example, to the ancient Greek artist? You recall that although the Greek artist's work was admired, he himself was scorned because he was a disreputable merchandiser. It is certainly not flattering to our society to find the logical answer to this question.

In her recent book *Rembrandt's Enterprise*, Svetlana Alpers indicates how Rembrandt's personal technique, his direction of studio activities and his contempt for the then current patronage system all resulted from his insistence upon the dignity of the individual human state, on man's "irreducible uniqueness." Rembrandt's enterprise was devoted to elevating the crucial relationship of the artist to society. "It was a topos of the time," Alpers says, "that the artist's engagement with his art was like the love of a man for his muse, his mistress, or in some versions his wife....Rembrandt pursued honor for art." Is there honor for art

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when a young graffiti artist, apparently believing he was being insufficiently rewarded by his sudden and great success, opens a boutique of his own graffitized clothes? Is there honor for art when extensive lobbying takes place around this nation by artists and their accountants for state and federal legislation to ensure that artists will receive a percentage of profits made in all future resales of their work? A column in *Art News* stated that if Van Gogh's *Irises* appreciates at the rate it has in the past forty years, in the past week it will have increased by $25,874. A wealthy client who had recently bought a painting at the world's record price for that particular artist—almost a quarter of a million dollars—goes to see a well-known dealer to speak about her thrilling purchase; she closes the door to his office and, in a semi-whisper, says, "Now, please tell me what's so good about this artist's work—I don't understand it at all." Thus are art world record prices made at auction. Recently I received a typical broadside for an art newsletter stating "...we will brief you on current and coming trends...on artists who are over- (and under-) priced...on conditions which can affect the value of your collection and redirect your plans for acquisition and disposal...on entire schools of art, old and new, which are due to rise or fall in demand, or languish at present levels." Last October's *Vogue* Magazine featured a young artist who, it reports, is paid from $10,000 to $15,000 for his paintings; he calls the people who buy them "drips" and says,"Suckers buy my work...."

How did this dishonor to art occur? It's curious that the origins of the present situation were esthetic before they were economic. Its roots were planted by Dadaism about seventy-five years ago. Since that time there have been schisms in Dadaism, but the version which dominates today is Marcel Duchamp's. Duchamp, prophetic, provocatively complex, a professor of indifference, was a combination of Mephistopheles and the Pied Piper. About forty years after he tried to exhibit his infamous *Urinal*, he gave a speech in Houston at an American Federation of Arts meeting. He began it by saying, "Let us consider two important factors—the two poles of the creation of art: the artist on the one hand, and on the other, the spectator who becomes the posterity." He then went on to emphasize the creative role of the spectator. Art from the hand of the artist comes to us in its "raw state," he said, "it must be 'refined' as pure sugar from molasses,

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by the spectator through the change from inert matter into a work of art." From this thought it is a short step to the contemporary cliché, "What is said to be art is art; what is said about art becomes true." Cookie jars have recently been the heroes of this esthetic reversal, when jars identical to ones selling for twelve dollars at second-hand shops were sold nearby at an auction house for several thousands because they had been collected by Andy Warhol. From this kind of Duchampian Dada ethos, the notion that life and art are inseparable emerged with unconfined force. The elimination of this dichotomy was a greater revolution than Cubism or Surrealism. For the final and inescapable conclusion to be drawn from it was that art could be entirely dispensed with.

Duchamp's view that art had ceased to be a form which expressed the most important spiritual considerations goes back to Hegel's famous lectures on esthetics and has gained increasing momentum over the years. Arthur Danto has written about the Hegelian view that "art approaches a kind of philosophical cognition," and draws the Hegelian conclusion that "when this cognition is achieved, there is no longer any point to or need of art. Art is a kind of transitional state in the coming of a certain kind of knowledge."

This is a depressing idea. The visual arts, literature, and music, at their highest potential, each in its own particular way, investigate the nature of what we call reality. Their fundamental motivation may be akin to that of religion or philosophy or science, but each is a symbolic system which retains its singularity, none replaces the other. Painting is a kind of visual philosophy,, but paint cannot be confused with words. Art does change its forms, and there will be periods of changing emphasis, of decadence and inferior quality; but the arts persevere as does our need for them.

There are many reasons for the present state of the visual arts. There is the hustling art market, with its cynicism and philosophical nihilism; but there is another element which is even more specific to the work of art. I have in mind art reproduction and, in particular, the color transparency—the 35-mm. color slide.

I think most of us recognize that a work of art has a distinct physical presence. No writer has written more eloquently on this subject than Walter Benjamin, the German essayist and critic,

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who committed suicide in 1940 when the Nazis invaded France. Walter Benjamin referred to the physical presence of the work of art as the *aura.* In his prophetic 1936 essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," he suggested that "changes in the medium of contemporary perception can be comprehended as decay of the aura." He defined aura as a certain physical and psychic distance between the viewer and the object. He related the decay of the aura to "the desire of contemporary masses to bring things closer spatially and humanly, which is just as ardent as their bent towards overcoming the uniqueness of every reality by accepting its reproduction." He added, "Every day the urge grows stronger, to get hold of an object at very close range by means of its likeness, its reproduction." And then, Benjamin continued, "The reproduction as offered by picture magazines and newsreels differs from the image seen by the unarmed eye." He meant by "the unarmed eye" the eye which looks directly and only at the original object; I must also interject that in 1936 picture magazines and newsreels were the chief means of mechanical reproduction seen by the public; today we have means far superior to those of his time. To return to Benjamin's words, "Uniqueness and permanence," he said, "are as closely linked to the [unarmed eye] as are transitoriness and reproducibility in the [reproduction]. To pry an object from its shell, to destroy its aura is the mark of a perception whose sense of the universal quality of things has increased to such a degree that it extracts it even from a unique object by means of reproduction."

Benjamin was aware that a work of art has a quality of uniqueness that is absent from the reproduction. But I must insist further on the essential character of this uniqueness which is seen in the workings of the artist's hand. It's the hand which is responsible for the aura, it's the hand, the sensitivity of its touch, the action of which can reveal so much about the artist's perceptions which are missing from the reproduction. I mean, for example, the movement of the brush, the character of the gesture, the quality and sensuousness of touch—premeditated or instinctual–the *matiére* of the paint, what we might call the surface or the paint quality, the freshness, the texture, the translucency or transparency, not to speak of the accuracy of the color or its intensity or tonal value. Most obviously absent, of course, is the

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scale of the original; its size can be denoted by a caption, but the scale is inevitably annihilated. All of these characteristics are intrinsic to any original work of art and are absolutely vital in the making of a judgment about it. They are part of the attributes which bring to life the actual presence, the aura of any work of art.

I open my mail, and there it says, "Please send us some slides of your work." Museums, galleries, collectors, awarders of fellowships and prizes, all request slides without any desire to see the original work. Important judgments which can help make or break a young or old artist's career are made on the basis of the color transparency alone. The fact is that these so-called transparencies are not transparencies at all but the opposite—they are veils which separate, even estrange the spectator from the real work of art. There is a great dilemma here; because, with tens of thousands of artists in New York City alone and tens of thousands in the rest of the country, not to speak of abroad, there is an enormous quantity of work to be seen. It's increasingly expensive to transport this work. The costs of running private and public institutions have become stupendous. So the economic problems involved with looking at art are presumed to have been solved by the use of the slide. But we cannot escape from the fact that a far more serious problem results when the original work of art is displaced by the slide and judgments are made from it. An artist will usually on request send out a group of slides in a plastic file, a sheet of maybe twenty transparent tiny envelopes that display twenty 35 mm. slides. I'm always disturbed by the mortuary aspect of these files; they remind me of an assemblage of dead insects or a collection of postage stamps. Uniformly tiny, the tissue of paint flattened out to nonexistence, physically and psychologically impenetrable, falsely illuminated, all life sucked out of the original work, the viewer is deceived. He gets an idea of the subject matter and the iconography as well as a hint of the mode or style but very little else. The slide has value only as a souvenir, a reminder of work already seen and studied. The reproduction can help one recall the reaction one had in the physical presence of the original, but little more. I do use slides when I lecture about my own painting, but during my lectures my words have equal time with the slides and they can immodestly suggest to the audience the character of the attributes missing from the reproduc-

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tion. I also use slides for my inventory, for identification, and I sometimes have trouble recognizing my own work in them.

The popular use of slides leads to another extraordinary contemporary phenomenon of which few people are as yet aware. Many young artists, not as stubborn as I am, concede the critical importance of the slide for the dissemination of their work and adjust their work to the very peculiarities of the slide or of other reproductive media. They seem for the sake of the reproduction to be saying, "To hell with scale, touch, light, all those old-fashioned subtleties; let's get rid of everything that doesn't reproduce. We want shocking or vulgar imagery, gaudy color, coarse brushwork or conversely, the kind of pictorial photographic exactitude which hides all painterliness." These will provoke an immediate reaction for they are made to reproduce effectively and communicate instantly. This, incidentally, is why the collecting of photographs has taken on such a new importance. No time is needed to penetrate further because the very qualities one might seek by penetration are absent from the work.

A few years ago, I was asked to judge paintings and award prizes in a competition. Because of transportation costs, it was required that a preliminary elimination of contestants be made by viewing slides of their proposed submissions. The works chosen from the slides were then to be delivered, seen, and judged. When that occurred, I was immediately disappointed by a substantial number of paintings which had looked terrific in the slides. Having experienced the same kind of disappointment several other times, I began to wonder how many good paintings I had unwittingly eliminated as a result of the falsification of the reproductive medium. I am afraid that if reproductive processes continue to overwhelm the work of art, its essential qualities may purposefully be eliminated by artists in the future. Walter Benjamin said prophetically over a half-century ago: "To an ever increasing degree the work of art reproduced becomes the work of art designed for reproducibility."

An interesting analogy occurs in the literary world. A recent *New York Times* article headlined, "Writers Find Talking Is the Key to Selling," drew attention to the fact that literary agents are now sending videotapes along with their authors' book proposals to show how well their clients can perform in a sales pitch on the tube. Book editors nowadays have VCRs in their offices to

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analyze the author's sales potential. One editor was quoted as saying, "Editors will put off making offers on a book until we see a tape or meet the author."

One of the most serious effects upon art of the seduction by technology is that it is so geared to immediacy of impact that it loses its possibilities to induce contemplation. Baudrillard's decree that artists must make art that does not require contemplation denies the essence of significant art. Through time, through an inner focusing, there can slowly be revealed the true character of the varied layers, the strata of the work. Obviously, the work of art must entice the spectator at the very start, but such enticement is of a relatively momentary value, a mere first step to intrigue, to pull the spectator into a web of deeper meaning. One last quote of Benjamin's which refers to the Dada epoch: "In the decline of middle-class society," he says, "contemplation became a school for asocial behavior; it was countered by distraction as a variant of social content. A rather vehement distraction was assured by making works of art the center of scandal. One requirement was foremost: to outrage the public." This process continues today. We see it in the media display of the most scandalous artists' private lives, the clothes they wear to openings, their haircuts, foods, bedrooms. We see it also in the already shopworn attempt to incorporate bizarre paraphernalia in their work, or to use deliberately gauche materials or primitive techniques. We see it in their choice of subject matter, such as sexual perversions or criminal activities. This is not to say that the use of such elements cannot have artistic purposes, but almost invariably their primary aim, admitted to or not, is to shock, to draw attention to idiosyncrasies, to scandalize. Benjamin pointed out that an attempt was being made in our century to hit the spectator with the force of a bullet, and that the reproduction was the perfect medium for assailing the spectator.

One of the greatest values of a work of art in any medium is the opportunity for its audience to become absorbed in it. If the spectator's reaction to visual art is only an immediate one, leaving no room for a contemplative response, that art is reduced to a graphic experience. It would have assumed, in fact, some of the characteristics of a reproduction, not of a work of art at its highest potential. That potential denies the current market-dominated

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concept of art; it contends that consumerism is the lowest common denominator of communication.

Franz Kafka said to his friend, Gustav Janouch: "Prayer and art are passionate acts of will. One wants to transcend and enhance the will's normal possibilities. Art like prayer is a hand outstretched in the darkness, seeking for some touch of grace which will transform in into a hand that bestows gifts. Prayer means casting oneself into the miraculous rainbow that stretches between becoming and dying, to be utterly consumed in it, in order to bring its infinite radiance to bed in the frail, little cradle of one's own existence."

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Dorothea Straus

PETITE PLAISANCE

"You will recognize my house by the sign, *Petite Plaisance*, and by the fields in front of it," said the writer, Marguerite Yourcenar, when she gave my husband, Roger Straus, her American publisher, instructions for our visit.

Petite Plaisance: the name sounded at once regal and casual, and combined with the vision of a sweep of acres, it conjured up in my mind's eye a picture of one of those purportedly small châteaus, like the photographs that used to hang in the compartments of the French trains in my childhood. It would be my first meeting with Madame Yourcenar, and from her books it seemed fitting to find her in a dwelling only slightly less splendid than the palace of a king—a royal retreat like Josephine Bonaparte's *Malmaison* or the *Petit Trianon* of Marie Antionette. For her writings are aristocratic, self-assured, products of an old culture and scholarship, each book bearing the stamp of a rightful monarch of letters.

But Marguerite Yourcenar (the pen name is an acronym from the original, de Crayencour), born in Brussels of a Belgian mother and a French father, no longer lived in Europe. She had been relocated for many years at Mount Desert Island, Maine. So our pilgrimage there was thronged with the usual summer weekend travellers to New England. At take-off at Bar Harbor, the local, one-engine propeller plane sputtered and coughed as if to shatter its rickety sides. But just as an ancient servitor resists retirement and relegation to a nursing home, faced with its inevitable end in the junkyard, the taxi plane rose haltingly off the ground. There was no *post chaise* nor carapisoned horses to take us to *Petite Plaisance*.

Following Marguerite Yourcenar's directions, my husband and I walked along the street of her town in search of *Petite Plaisance*. We passed the usual village shops and the modest homes, each with its parsimonious allotment of front lawn. At

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the end of the road we came to a tall, fieldstone wall with an iron grille gate, the entrance to an estate, but the name outside was unknown. Beyond, there was only virgin woods. Puzzled, we retraced our steps, reading each signpost with care. In front of a small shingled house, no different from its neighbors, with a stingy square of grass spread before it like a mat, we saw with disbelief the name: *Petite Plaisance.*

Upon entering, the interior was so obscure that I was able to distinguish our hostess only in silhouette: a massive form moving with measured dignity to greet us. The voice was calm, deep, the words faintly accented. She seemed to fill the limited space to brimming, and like a classical structure rising above an overcrowded district, she dwarfed the clutter of furniture. Growing accustomed to the interior twilight, I was not able to discern the pillared cupboards, the claw-footed chairs and tables, gilt-trimmed, the heavy, wintry burgundy-red tasseled curtains of a *belle epoque,* urban, bourgeois decor. As in a dream, I groped for that other place that my imagination had created, more real than this solid setting in which I found myself. But just as someone who falls out of love is confounded when he sees, finally, the real object of his obsession, and relinquishes that other image, I was forced to forego the aristocratic retreat of my fancy and to accept this stuffy salon on the main street of a New England village.

Marguerite Yourcenar and my husband were discussing the publication of a forthcoming book on the Japanese writer, Mishima. I had leisure to examine her, and her appearance unlike her setting was not at variance with my expectations. The creator of *Memoirs of Hadrian* looked more imperial Roman than French. Nearing eighty, she remained ageless, her ponderous body denoting power rather than excess. Her head was large, sculptural, the white hair brushed back from a spacious brow. Her features were generous; only the eyes, under heavy brows, were small, of undetermined color, as if the acute intelligence of their glance, like some strong acid, had burned away pigment, leaving only spark and depth. I seem to recall a mole on a cheekbone, the only coquettish touch on the imperial countenance, the sole reminder of my former dreamings of French court life.

A miniature gray poodle bounded into the room, interrupting the business discussion. I noted a new tone of tenderness in Marguerite Yourcenar's voice as she said: "This is Trier. He is

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the latest in a long line of pets. Later I will show you my dog cemetery in the garden."

A dog's cemetery! Hadrian's tomb would have been less surprising! She continued talking about the book in progress. No detail, jacket design, type, the quality of paper, was overlooked. She had strong opinions on everything; her courteous suggestions had been thought through with meticulous care. And yet, there were manuscript pages scattered everywhere, on every inch of space. They seemed to flutter like wings and, at first glance, I feared that something would be lost. However, Yourcenar's serenity reassured me. Other authors might require more outward order, but the prose of Marguerite Yourcenar has the quality of perfect control: this outward flurry of paper, any domestic disorderliness, could be only apparent.

We sat down to lunch at a small table next to the living room window facing the street, partially hidden by those wine-red portieres. And I seemed to hear the sounds of the Paris of the Second Empire issuing from behind their stately folds; the clopping of horseshoes on cobblestones, the cries of street vendors, and the smell of sausage hanging outside a neighboring butcher shop. Most certainly, the meaty smell was not from our frugal meal. A bowl of shiny cranberries, resembling milliner's trim on a *belle epoque* hat, was placed at the center of the table, flanked by salad greens, Greek olives, and coarse, crusty peasant bread.

"I grow these berries myself," said Marguerite Yourcenar, handing the dish with pride.

I watched her as she ate. She tasted the cranberries thoughtfully as though to extract their very essence. Marguerite Yourcenar was sensual, sentient, a potentate who, having lived through a rich variety of sensory experiences, had come to relish the ordinary fruits of the world with a connoisseur's pleasure born of past hedonism, now tempered by the mellow wisdom of age. It was no accident that her remarkable "imaginary" memoir of the Emperor Hadrian was in the works for about thirty years. Often begun, often interrupted by travel, war, love, illness, but still there until the writer's voice merged with that other one, dusty with time, and the completed book seemed more an act of perpetuity than a contrived memoir. Here at a luncheon table in Maine sat Marguerite Yourcenar, the alchemist, who had made this fusion—delighting in her homegrown cranberries, like the

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aging emperor himself, experimenting with his sophisticated senses. To my uneducated palate, the fruit tasted merely bitter.

After lunch, as she had promised, we looked at her postage-stamp garden, the site of the dog cemetery, at the back of the house. The forest crept around the sunny patch, dark and unfathomable, causing the frail blooms to appear valiant and transitory. It would have been easy to miss the graves, marked by flat paving stones, if she had not pointed them out and lovingly mentioned each dog by name. Trier, the current companion, ran about among the memorials to his predecessors.

My husband and I stayed until late, talking of many things, mainly about several books underway and plans for the future.

"If time is given me," she added serenely.

Her conversation was detached; her ego required neither adulation nor boasting to sustain it. I told her that I had been reading her *Archives du Nord*, a memoir-biography that opens with a sketch of Flanders in the age of the caveman. At the advent of the late Middle Ages, Madame Yourcenar is able to weave into her book the histories of members of her father's Flemish-French ancestry (landowners, petty nobility, bourgeois), with the somber earth-toned threads of an antique tapestry, here and there effaced by age. By the nineteenth century the memoir grows more detailed and personal, but the book concludes with the birth of the author.

She told us that she was considering a sequel to this diptych (the first volume, inversely, begins with her birth and travels back a generation) "...but I will stop when I am fifteen," she said, "no one should attempt to write about himself beyond that age, one becomes self-conscious, the temptation to embellish is too strong—and, after all, is it so important?"

When we left, she accompanied us to the entrance. She had thrown a thin white wool scarf over her head, protection against the cool Maine evening. Now she resembled a monument to the European immigrant. Yet she could not be regarded as an exile. French (the first woman to be admitted to their Academy), Belgian, New England townswoman, world traveler–she was all of these, and none. Her country lay in the rich and varied produce of her prose.

Marguerite Yourcenar has died. Like the Emperor Hadrian, she suffered from vascular disease and, like him, also, I am cer-

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tain she watched the course of her own end with melancholy, scientific, philosophical interest. Surprisingly, she bequeathed *Petite Plaisance* intact to the town as a museum, and she is buried in the local cemetery. I do not believe that many pilgrims will visit her memorials in Mount Desert Island.

I have chosen to close this memoir with a bow to *Petite Plaisance* (palace of a kind), by quoting from Marguerite Yourcenar's inspired serenade to the *Château of Chenonceaux:*

> A visit to old houses can lead to points of view we did not anticipate. *

*"Ah Mon Beau Château," from *The Dark Brain of Piranesi and Other Essays.* By Marguerite Yourcenar. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux. 1984.

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Rachel Hadas

ON TIME

A line from George Seferis's poem, "Thrush" has been haunting me: "Houses, you know, grow stubborn easily, when you strip them bare." At first the line seems neither advice nor warning—just neutral generalization. But the generalization is also a trope, and a rather somber and hermetic one at that. One way to read it is to push "strip bare" over toward a darker connotation, such as that of violent abuse or heartless neglect. Read that way, the stubbornness that Seferis tells us is a result of this stripping immediately takes on the pathetic, dishevelled wildness of a neglected child. This reading is bolstered by an adjacent passage in "Thrush" which compares houses to babies:

> New at first, like babies
> who play in gardens with tassels of the sun,
> they embroider colored shutters and shining doors
> over the day.

Is the poet telling us that houses grow stubborn when they're neglected? Not necessarily. "Strip bare" can be taken as merely an emptying out, a clearing of the accumulated debris human habitation creates. Thoreau's passion for spareness comes to mind, though he would strip more than merely the house: "At

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Author's Note: Works cited in this essay are "Thrush" by George Seferis (translated by Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard), from *George Seferis: The Collected Poems* (Princeton University Press, 1981); "Souvenirs" by Jane Cooper, from *Scaffolding: New and Selected Poems* (Anvil Press, 1984); *Walden* by Henry David Thoreau (Norton, 1951); *Cranford* by Elizabeth Gaskell (Macmillan, 1907); and "Hotel de L'Univers et Portugal" by James Merrill from *The Country of a Thousand Years of Peace*, (Atheneum 1977). "On Time" is the first half of a two-part essay in the completed collection, *In and Out of Books*.

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present our houses are cluttered and defiled....Before we can adorn our houses with beautiful objects the walls must be stripped, and our lives must be stripped, and beautiful housekeeping and beautiful living be laid for a foundation."

And here in our own century is Jane Cooper, a poet much concerned with dispossessions:

> Houses, houses, we lodge in such husks!
> inhabit such promises, seeking the unborn
> in a worn-out photograph, hoping to break free
> even of our violent and faithful lives.
> ("Souvenirs")

If bric-a-brac of any sort is the outward and visible evidence of an inward and spiritual disarray, can Seferis's reference to stripping be an approving one? There are still other possible readings. "Stripped bare" in "Thrush" may mean bare of people, a sense which would echo the memorable opening line of the poem, "The houses I had they took from me." A human presence is more essential than furnishings, and deprived of that presence a house may grow crusty and eccentric—in a word, stubborn. It's not possible to impose any one meaning on Seferis's luminous line. But I've been ruminating about the cluster that I think is responsible for the line's unmistakable, if mysterious, authority: the three words *house, bare,* and *stubborn.*

Stubbornly, we choose either to keep our houses as bare as possible or else to let them fill up—those houses we are lucky enough not to have had taken from us. This summer as she does every summer, a rather Chekhovian niece of mine has come to visit here in Vermont. Predictable in mid-August as the ripening of apples on the Dutchess tree, my never very latent inhospitality rises to the surface. I'm fond of my niece, but she is problematic because she traditionally sleeps in my studio, my own bare house-within-a-house, which I have a territorial urge to defend by stripping, filling it only with my own presence, or rather with my absence—the presence is that of my words.

My words; my hours. The choice of bareness isn't merely a matter of space; it involves time, too. Appropriately, the opening

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line of "Thrush," which I've already quoted in part, doesn't end with the houses being taken away but moves on to the temporal dimension:

> The houses I had they took away from me. The times happened to be unpropitious: war, destruction, exile...

War, destruction, and exile are public events or conditions that are experienced on an immensely private scale, a vast microcosm of suffering. And if one's private time is blasted by history, as by a war or exile, the house can be said to be one's private place, equally vulnerable to all sorts of invasions, including the invasion of time itself. The stripping in "Thrush" can certainly be read also with regard to time; the houses that grow stubborn when you strip them bare remind me of Hamlet's "Let her paint an inch thick, to this favor she must come." Oddly enough, that was the line that my mother said wouldn't stop going through her mind when she recently visited a friend in a nursing home.

Trying to escape time, we manage only to heighten its effects. We can, of course, put every household item meticulously back in place; leave things pristine; cover our tracks; erase evidence of our passage. The ladies in *Cranford* tack little newspaper paths onto their new carpet to prevent premature wear and tear and thwart the destructive rays of the sun. As the sun moves, they have to keep moving their paper paths along the floor.

Or we can be cavalier, overlooking wear and tear, giving free rein to entropy. Alas, ignoring the passage of time doesn't slow it down, any more than hoisting the past onto a pedestal does. The house can go unswept; future archaeologists will happily excavate the complex squalor of layer upon layer of chicken bones, shattered dishes, old coins. It's true that choosing not to sweep the floor does give me a little more time today; but will the house, sensing neglect, grow stubborn? Thoreau didn't think so:

> A lady once offered me a mat, but as I had no room to spare within the house, nor time to spare within or without to

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> shake it, I declined it...it is best to avoid the beginnings of evil.

That luminous complex *house-stubborn-bare* is illustrated, is almost enacted, by the two houses I'm lucky enough to spend time in every summer. Each in its own way (or her way—who said the house was the mother?), the house in Vermont and the house in Maine silently discourse about the relation of interiors to the way we think of time and work.

First, the house in Maine, on Squirrel Island, where my husband spent his boyhood summers and where we now go for two weeks in July. This house has a mildly museum-like air, but the museum is an inhabited one. No velvet cord prevents people from sitting on the chairs; everything is well used, even shabby with use. Yet the living room is a period piece, and there is an unwritten law against using the best china. It is easy to envision the denizens of the house a couple of generations back, eating with this silverware, rocking on this porch, rinsing off sandy children and grandchildren in set tubs (a term coined, as far as I know, by George's grandmother—certainly I've never heard it used of any place but here).

This house demands and gets a good deal of care in order to maintain its gently paradoxical air of inviolate hospitality. It has most certainly not been stripped bare, in Seferic terms; neither does it grow stubborn. Use me, it seems to say—on my own terms, and with care, but do fill me with life. Or with fleshly life—for the house is thronged with ghosts, sometimes nearly visible. Last summer our son, then aged three, invented the term "dream machine," as an invisible contraption somewhere in the eaves of the master bedroom. I thought of James Merrill's phrase about the strange bed "whose recurring dream we are." Dreams and ghosts are thick on the ground here—a sign, if any is needed, that far from being bare or stubborn, the house is teeming with the moist night-blossoming flora of the oneiric. Being on an island helps; so does being apparently exempted from time. The house, like the island itself, is enclosed and other, like a dream; memorable and forgettable, like a dream; unreal and vivid, like a dream; a lucky gift or anxious burden, like a dream.

It may seem odd that this very quality of fullness, of not being stripped bare or stubborn, does not translate, in terms of time,

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into a generosity of hours. This is a place of time past, for the ghosts; for the living, it's more like the Wood Between the Worlds in C. S. Lewis's *The Magician's Nephew*—an interlude, time out. Even if one is too salted or stunned or befogged to feel contemplative, the past will unfold, and because of the relative emptiness of the foreground, will appear clearly.

Squirrel Island is a summer colony of one hundred-odd houses; many families have been coming for generations. In the resulting emphasis on kinship and blood ties, the place resembles a Greek village more than any American counterpart I can think of. In the Greek village I knew, one would ask a child not "What's your name?" but "Whose are you?" Last summer on Squirrel, a girl of five asked which cottage we lived in; another, a little younger, seeing me without my son, issued this puzzled challenge: "Do you have a kid?" Both these little girls were using formulaic questions to place me on their island, that realm which the dream machine presented one night to my husband as an immense and intricate map carved up in pieces like a jigsaw puzzle. (I had my own dream after I'd left Squirrel. The irrigation ditches I'd been reading about in Stanley Crawford's *Mayordomo*, an account of farming in New Mexico, were transplanted to the island. But it wasn't water flowing through them, it was time.)

All social formulae are ways of fitting a person into a preexisting structure. They're wonderful for connecting us with an unchosen, inherited past; less useful in terms of the chosen but unshared present (compare it to a lover instead of a relative) which consists of one's work. Vermont, a place where we do work, is a lot weaker than Squirrel Island on strands of kinship, ritual formulae, and ghosts.

Here in Vermont I write these lines undistracted by dream machines, museum rooms. There's a crust of clutter, but most of it is functional—no best dishes, no elegant chairs. Whatever ghosts walk here—I'm not saying there are none—are impatient of the surface of things. I think they want, as do the living, to work at a particular project and let the house go hang. And last summer it seemed to me that the house, knowing it is no one's priority, knowing it has been relegated to second place in everyone's daily concerns, if not their affections, has grown stubborn in return. Stripped of attention if of nothing else, it has retaliated with the usual dustballs, spiderwebs, bats, mice, but also perhaps

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with ever more steeply slanting floors, leaky places in the roof, a well that has less water every summer. Drought; entropy; the forces of nature? Of course. Some houses have nothing to do with nature; I sometimes envision this one as a cellar hole with gardens around it, familiar trees, the lawn turned to meadow. No catastrophe, I hope—just a gradual blurring of the boundary between indoors and outdoors. I hope it doesn't happen too soon. Whatever Thoreau says, a certain kind of human endeavor needs a modicum of shelter from the outdoors.

When time is in the foreground, as in Maine, and we become spectators ourselves, we're modest and peripheral enough to see ghosts, to tend the altar of the past and give our selfish concerns second place. But whether we pay homage to the past or not, how hard it is to live in time! To ride it without falling, to balance as it moves, to hurry it or slow it down, to heed or ignore it—nothing works for long.

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LETTER FROM EASTERN EUROPE

Ronald Radosh

SUNSHINE AT NOON

The event itself would have been next to unthinkable one year ago, before the historic Roundtable Agreement reached by the Polish government with Solidarity. Now, in early May, David Horowitz, Peter Collier, Jim Denton, Jeffrey Herf, Joshua Muravchik, and myself are in Poland for an Eastern European small-scale version of the Second Thoughts Conference (held in Washington, D.C. in October of 1987). Cosponsored by the National Forum Foundation and various Solidarity chapters in Cracow, Poland, we met at the historic Jagiellonian University, where a large audience of students and Polish intellectuals heard papers on such topics as "The Soviet Empire and Western Europe: U. S. Policy Alternatives" and "The Death of the Socialist Future and the Collapse of the Communist Empire." Arriving in time for May Day, we witnessed thousands of Solidarity members—in what looked like a cross section of Cracow's population—marching in the pouring rain from the Nowa Huta steel mill to the famous arked church that was used by Solidarity for protection during the time of severe repression.

Meeting Polish intellectuals was at first confusing. We in the West are most familiar with the views of such former dissidents, now oppositionists, as Jacek Kuron and Adam Michnik, whose terrain is that of the familiar social-democratic tradition. The views of the Cracow intellectuals came as somewhat of a shock. Here we met Pawel Kloczowski, an editor of the legal opposition quarterly *Res Publica*, the current issue of which featured an evaluation of the works of Hannah Arendt, an article on the meaning of 1968, and an essay by Leszek Kolakowski. The editors still have to submit material in this publication to the censor. For this reason, the intellectuals also produce *Arka*—published

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clandestinely on cheaper paper—which prints original material as well as essays turned down by the government. *Arka*, its editor Ryszard Legutko told us frankly, is in American terms "neoconservative." The journal began publication in 1983, for the purpose of promoting a free exchange of ideas while the country was under martial law. Seeking to oppose "the Communist monopoly in the distribution of culture," *Arka* editors reject both socialism and communism, and try to "refute the still widely held notion that Socialism...has something valuable to contribute to the understanding of human needs and aspirations..." In economics it stands for the free market, and in history it seeks to oppose "the Leftist point of view" on the Korean War, the Spanish Civil War, and the Cold War. Seeking to integrate Western liberal democracy with Polish political and religious thought, *Arka's* editors also oppose what they call the "relativistic and nihilistic tendencies pervading modern art." *Arka* regularly summarizes articles from *Commentary* and *Encounter*, and it opposes neutralism, feminism and "the influence of the Left on the media and on education at American colleges and universities." Its international editorial advisory board includes Saul Bellow, Alain Bensançon, François Bondy, Leszek Kolakowski, Melvin Lasky, and Norman Podhoretz. If such statements do not make their stance clear enough, the Polish edition of *Commentary* is widely distributed to readers of both publications.

Our group met at a lovely privately-owned apartment overlooking the market square in Cracow, with the editors of both publications, along with Adam Szostkiewicz, editor-in-chief of *Tygodik Powszechny* (*The Catholic Weekly of Culture and Society*), which sells the maximum number of copies they are able to print each week, over 100,000. The editors of each publication said that they seek to create a political climate that will enable Poland to move towards a market society based on political democracy, the introduction of private capitalism, and the dismantling of the large and inefficient state-run industries, such as the Nowa Huta steel mill.

Indeed, one Polish graduate student sitting in, one of our translators and a youth activist, was intent on letting me know his opinions of Franklin D. Roosevelt. I expected a criticism of the Yalta agreements, but instead, he said, "Roosevelt was perhaps the worst president for your country. He created the New Deal,

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destroyed private capitalism, and created a welfare state." I had to respond that in our view, F.D.R. had saved capitalism and had managed to create a previously nonexistent social net for those who suffered under unrestrained capitalism. And the assembled editors also noted their opposition to feminism, which resulted in a vigorous debate among the Americans, some of whom were alone in defending the women's rights movement. We quickly learned that in Cracow, at least, the advanced students and intellectuals subscribed to the economic theories of F. A. Hayek, Milton Friedman,and Murray Rothbard, all free-marketeers. And in politics, as Pawel Kloczowski put it, they were influenced by the writings of the American Founding Fathers, particularly Madison and Jefferson.

Indeed, what struck us is that a major fear of these Polish intellectuals is the unconscious acceptance of socialism by the mass of workers. They seem to fear that particularly for many in Solidarity, of which they consider themselves a part, there persist the elements of a socialist mass movement that, as Polish political theorist Andrez Walicki wrote some years back, opposes "authoritarian bureaucratic collectivism not in the name of individualistic values, but in the name of a democratic collectivism of the masses." More directly, these free-marketeers fear that the narrow trade union interests of many Solidarity members will militate against the kind of economic productivity and market system desired by the would-be entrepreneurs of the middle class.

Yet, as Walicki wrote in a recent article, "Liberalism in Poland," (*Critical Review*, Winter 1988), the most fundamental opposition in Poland emerged not in Warsaw, but in Cracow, where disciples of Hayek and Friedman argue not simply against totalitarianism, but for market mechanisms in the economy and political liberalism in the polity. It is this group, as Walicki writes, that has become "the most influential and dynamic intellectual group," one that has put socialists and others on the political defensive. Ironically, since even the Communists understand that a market economy is the only way out of the deep economic crisis, these liberals, in spite of their deep aversion to Communism and any form of Marxism, have become political allies that the Party cannot do without.

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The free-market group, unlike oppositionists who favored a struggle against the totalitarian system, believe that one can move forward in Poland without challenging its current rulers, who, they argue, also favor political reform and a new market economy. Their concentration is on using the available political space in civil society, through creation of independent small businesses, opposition publications, and cultural organizations of an independent nature, such as a musical group we heard perform, The Lute Guild. This group of accomplished musicians uses music as a mechanism to make Poles aware of their status as a nation with a cultural past, including that of the suppressed and largely unknown (to contemporary Poles) Jewish culture of old Poland. Ostensibly purely cultural, the Guild uses music as a way to foster both an oppositional stance as well as an appreciation of what it means to be Polish, to create a national identity of a pluralistic multi-ethnic country, which they feel is a prerequisite for breaking out of the mold created by Communism.

Although aligned with the Church, as Adam Szostikiewicz put it, they have many difficulties with the official Church. The liberals clearly feel that the Church and the Pope, too committed to economic collectivism for their taste, are out of touch with Poland's reality in the economic doctrines they espouse. They argue that Pope John Paul's Encyclical, *Laborem Exercens*, yielded too much to socialism at a historical moment when capitalist rebirth was needed in Eastern Europe. Hence it is Cracow, as Walicki writes, that has become the center "of what might be called enlightened conservatism in Poland." And the ancient Jagiellonian University, where our conference was held, has become an autonomous center of independent thought and politics, distinct from that of the mass left of the Solidarity underground. Unlike the left, which the Cracow intellectuals see favoring democratization and wider participation in power, they favor limiting the very scope of political power through liberalization based on the spontaneous force of the market.

What these reformers advocate is a nonsocialist revolution from above, in which Poland's Communist rulers do away with socialism, enabling the population to buy and sell, produce and travel, instead of a utopian revolution that achieves socialist principles through democratization. And those within Solidarity, including its two major leaders in Cracow, Zbigniew Romaszewski

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and Jan Rokita, the leader of the Cracow branch of Freedom and Peace, work for independent enterprises and cooperatives through enlargement of the private sector. Certainly, as Walicki notes, "Polish liberals can be accused of a certain extremism in praising the free market and in dismissing the merits of mixed economies," but certainly he also is correct that this is but a sound reaction against the realities of the results of the so-called planned economy. Preaching a work ethic, capitalist values, rationality and realism, along with a dedication to Western culture, these Cracow intellectuals offer a new creative anticommunism, which may indeed be the future of Poland.

It is perhaps not surprising to find that some young people, organized in groups like Freedom and Peace and Fighting Youth, have a position far different from the other intellectuals. Skeptical of the Roundtable agreement reached by Lech Walesa with the government, the youth march in the Solidarity parades, but shower them with their own leaflets calling for a boycott of the coming elections. On Independence Day, the group refused to end a scheduled march as dusk arrived and instead marched on to the Soviet Consulate, where they chanted "Reds Go Home" and other anti-Soviet slogans. Some were clearly gunning for a confrontation with the police and being purposely provocative. A few days after our return, I heard a report on National Public Radio that a similar demonstration led by Fighting Youth in Cracow was met by police clubs and tear gas, as the Polish government made it clear that oppositional groups that refused to accept the agreement would be suppressed. Yet, these same young people wildly cheered the names of Rokita, Gil, and Romaszewski, who were the three favored candidates for the new parliament running on the Solidarity ticket from Cracow.

* * *

Arriving in Hungary from Poland is like going from night to day. The Hungarians may be complaining that the past year has seen a twenty-percent inflation, a declining standard of living, rising inflation as well as a need to service the $15 billion debt to Western creditors, but in comparison to Poland, Hungary is a thriving and dynamic economy. Vaci Utca, the famed shopping center in downtown Pest, sports video and record shops, book and clothing stores. There are no ration lines here, only a block-long line to enter the *Adidas* shop, and hordes waiting to eat

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at the fanciest McDonald's in Europe. Phone booths that work are everywhere, taxis plentiful and easy to get, and one could go to various cinemas to see *Rain Man, Midnight Run, Crocodile Dundee II,* or go to the theater to see *Les Misérables, Evita, Cats, Walt Disney World on Ice,* or the local version of the Folies Bèrgeres. (We did, and it isn't up to par.) Signs of Communism, propaganda or slogans, are virtually nonexistent. A fallen wooden red star, lying unceremoniously on the street in front of the obligatory May Day reviewing stand (sparsely attended at this year's festivities), stands symbolically for the reputation of Communism in this once Stalinist "people's democracy."

Given the exigencies of Hungary's location—a less strategic consideration for the Russians—and the developments in the Communist Party as well as the opposition, Hungary appears closer to achieving multiparty democracy, true democratic elections, and the demise of Communist rule far ahead of its neighbor Poland. Indeed, the once repressed opposition seems unable to keep up with the reforms implemented by the Party reformers. "They have opened a door we pushed against for years," one oppositionist commented, "and now we're running to enter it."

Opposition reformers from the largest opposition group, the Democratic Forum, met with us in their new makeshift offices in a Quonset hut structure, equipped with furniture, phones, office machines, and faxes. Claiming some twelve thousand members in different chapters throughout Hungary, the Forum is an umbrella opposition group, not yet a party, and seemingly confined to an intellectual elite. Their leaders who met with us included two professors (history and political science), a lawyer, and a businessman; laborers or peasants seemed not to be represented. Their goal is to refuse an offer for an agreement similar to the Polish Roundtable between Solidarity and the Communists. Rather, they favor a common framework behind which the opposition can unite and then talk as one voice to the government. Anxious to avoid violence or catastrophe, however, they realize the need to reach a compromise that all sides can accept. A neutral Hungary, in which they will be part of the Warsaw Pact in the same way France relates to NATO, is one possibility they hold out as a reality.

One of the leaders, a historian who taught recently at the University of California at Santa Barbara, responded with the fol-

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lowing when I asked him how he liked teaching in the United States. "In my country," he answered, "I can talk freely. But in Santa Barbara, I had to watch myself." Evidently, the good professor found that forthright anticommunism was suspect on that campus, unlike in his own country, where it is somewhat taken for granted.

The opposition, unlike in Poland, is being given full leverage and encouragement to form political parties for participation in scheduled national elections. Hungarians already have found that old prewar parties have been resurrected, including the peasant Smallholders' Party, the Social Democratic Party, the League of Free Democrats, as well as others, including a nascent group of Christian Democrats. The goal of the ruling Communists is clear. Hungary aspires to become the financial center of West European investment, and the country has to be made more attractive in order to reach that goal. All seem to agree that the old Stalinist system is dead forever, and that political freedom is necessary if a market economy is to take off. The fight now seems to be between the socialist market economy advocated by centrist Party chief Karoly Grosz, and the more fundamental antileftist and social democratic program espoused by the top party reformer, Imre Pozsgay, who is said to favor major constitutional reforms to be enacted before the scheduled June 1990 parliamentary elections, and most observers of the political scene predict he will soon replace Grosz as the Party's chief.

Gathering at the offices of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (HSWP), as the full committee met a few halls down to purge the now hated Janos Kadar, we met with Imre Szokai, Deputy Head of the International Department of the HSWP, and Csaba Tabajdi, Deputy Head of the Department of Inter-Party relations of the Central Committee and a Ph.D. in Political Science. The meeting started as the two men gave us their business cards. Did Lenin, we wondered, have a business card to give to Armand Hammer?

The two men apologized, lest they be called out in the middle of our meeting because of the purge of Kadar that was taking place. Indeed, Tabajdi began by dramatically telling us how uncontrolled power and the Stalinist model had created monsters like Kadar, whom he described as paranoid, crazed and demented. This system, he emphasized, is what led to the 1956 up-

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rising, which he saw as a legitimate popular rebellion against Stalinism. Gone were the old claims that the 1956 Revolution was a CIA plot against the People's Democracy. For someone who was raised on Herbert Aptheker's notorious book, *The Truth About Hungary*, which presumed to give its audience a historical account of a "counterrevolution" against socialism, it was shocking to hear such an account from leading Hungarian Communists. But of course, it is this reform faction that has taken the lead in resurrecting Nagy's memory and has used his murder as a weapon in the fight to oust Kadar from the leadership.

It became clear as the talk continued, however, that the Hungarian Communist reformers were miles away from what any of us called Communist. Szokasi and Tabajdi, and two of their colleagues, favored a genuine pluralist democracy, a constitutional government, a legal state, and what they termed a European identity for Hungary. The question, they said, is whether others would have the tolerance and patience to wait for the kind of economic development that would take place as a result of the transition to a market economy, along with aid and technical development that would put Hungary on its feet.

Politically, these Communists argued that the new oppositionists were not as yet ready to rule and take power, and that for the next few foreseeable years, Hungary's reform Communists would probably remain the ruling party. But, they admitted, political organizing and formation of new parties would give the opposition renewed strength, and it would be conceivable that within five to seven years, the Communists would find themselves as the opposition party. I asked the $64 question, "If in such a national election the Communists lost, would they step down from power?" I received in answer an unequivocable "yes."

Clearly, the thought that such a development might occur was so far in the future as to be of really little concern to them. At present, it appears that the reformers hope their faction would rule in coalition with the Social Democrats, who would proceed to modernize the economy along Western reform lines. Indeed, they said that in their estimate, the hard-line old Stalinist wing of the Party had about fifteen percent of support within its ranks, the reformers now commanded a strong fifty-five percent, and thirty-five percent were careerists who would shift to whoever they thought was winning. Both men had coauthored an article

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on the "Hungarian Social Model," which appeared in the official Party publication. Positing a peaceful "transition from monolithic relations to pluralism," they turned to foreign models: the "strict but effective economic policy solutions" carried out by Felipe Gonzales and the Spanish Socialists based on the "special values of social democracy," as well as the experiences of the "neoconservative parties" of the West, along with the international experiences of—South Korea, Taiwan, and Chile!

Of course, they mean to look toward the free market economic policies and not to the authoritarian right-wing political policies of the above regimes, which they rightly point out put a brake on economic progress that depends on development of political democracy. Commenting privately and asking that he not be directly quoted, one of the two leaders admitted that among themselves, they often talk about the meaning of socialism and fail to come up with any answers. Even calling themselves democratic socialists, he said, is insufficient. But describing himself as a man of the left, the HSWP leader said that under market conditions, Hungary would have a projected 100,000 unemployed within a short period of time. Thus he favored a "social net" to ease the pain of those dislocated by the transition to a market economy. In truth, he said, he and his reform Communists were actually moderate Western European social democrats, most impressed with the economic and political path taken by Gonzalez in Spain. When one of our group said he hoped their new regime would leave room for free trade unions, he responded that of course it would, but in the short run, militant narrow labor strikes would have to be contained lest they interfere with the operation of the market.

In one context, the Hungarian Communists are operating out of a desire to cement Western creditors' interest in investment. Thus General Secretary Karoly Grosz, whom many expect soon to be ousted by reformer Imre Pozsgay, wants convertible currency and the confidence of Western banks in Hungary's creditworthiness. Grosz recently told *The New York Times* that his nation needs $8 billion in Western capital in the next five years, in order to modernize its stagnant economy and to pay off the already accumulated debt to Western investors of $15 billion. At present, Hungary must borrow $4 billion per year to service existing debts. And to gain this investment, they know

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Hungary needs political stability as well as guarantees that no crazy left-wing government will suddenly nationalize private firms.

While the centrist Grosz believes this could happen without risking the rule and power of the existing Communist Party, the other reformers appear more sanguine and to understand that they too might eventually have to relinquish their governing role. But the opposition groups reject such an arrangement, and favor creation of a genuine multiparty system that could result in the eventual end of Communist one-party rule in a formerly Stalinist adjunct of the Soviet Union.

However, even the threat alone of a deep rupture causes fear on all sides that an excuse will be created for another 1956, in the form of either a Soviet intervention or, more likely, a military coup by hard-line Communists and their allies in the secret police and military. Indeed, given the public meetings of Hungarian reform Communists, it seems apparent that the old Communist party might break up into different wings, with the reformers creating their own party that will seek to ally with the still tiny but reformed Social Democrats, who have but three hundred members in the country. The Social Democrats, of course, had been one of those parties forced to merge with the Stalinists—hence the official name of the Communists is the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party. But now, seeking the alternative of a social democratic solution rather than a cataclysmic revolution, some do hope for a coalition in which the spirit of social democracy combines with the discipline of the old Communists to Westernize Hungary. This would be done in a fashion acceptable to the Soviet Union, with whom the government would maintain solidly friendly relations. Thus one Communist leader told Diana Johnstone of *In These Times* that the reform Communists were "looking for ways to get together" with the Social Democrats, and that they intended to "be their socialist conscience [while the Social Democrats would] be our democratic conscience."

Whether that scenario works out is an open question. Others, like the Free Democrats and their intellectual spokesman Janos Kis, hope that the end result in Hungary will be free markets and political democracy. At any rate, as Jacques Rupnik recently wrote in *The New Republic*, one can find the hallmarks of democracy in both Poland and Hungary. These include freedom of the

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press, the rule of law by constitution, and separation of the Party and the state. Indeed, one can walk into the well-stocked Budapest bookstores and see window displays of a few books paying homage to the murdered Premier Imre Nagy; Orwell's *1984*, Koestler's *Darkness at Noon*, as well as for balance, books by Perry Anderson, editor of the British *New Left Review*. Unlike Poland, where the bookstores seem required to stock the obligatory complete works of Lenin, there is little Marxism-Leninism to be found. The newsstands in Budapest all offer for sale *The International Herald-Tribune*, *Time*, and *Newsweek*, as well as *Le Monde* and other European papers. And although highly derivative, the Museum of Modern Art at the Heroes and Martyrs' Square is a vivid and striking space, filled with everything except socialist realism.

Travelling to Poland and Hungary, then, is in the current period an exhilarating experience. Years ago, when the hold of Stalinism on the peoples of Eastern Europe seemed to be an omnipresent force that would last forever, the fate of Poles, Czechs, and Hungarians seemed to be one of those determined outcomes of World War II that one had to accept. But now, due to the brave and often ingenious devices of the once beleaguered opposition, two of the Eastern European peoples, at least, seem on the verge of a new dawn. Journeying by train to Hungary, our small group had some trouble with Czech border guards. The Polish officers tried to help, warning us, as one of them put it, that the Czechs "are still crazy Communists." But as we have read, Vaclav Havel has been freed from prison, and Alexander Dubcek arrived at his home to meet with him, Western press in tow. One can go so far as to hope, perhaps, that even that madman Ceausescu in Romania will one day be in the position Janos Kadar now finds himself. An impossible dream? Ten years ago, one would have said the same about Poland and Hungary.

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Henry McDonald

HENRY JAMES AS NIETZSCHEAN: THE DARK SIDE OF THE AESTHETIC

Writers on Nietzsche can be divided into two groups: the tough and the tender. "Tough" Nietzscheans see the philosopher of the *Will to Power* as advocating the cultivation of strong individuals in a morally unstructured environment. "Tender" Nietzscheans admit that Nietzsche favored strong individuals but maintain that by "strength" he did not mean military prowess or even social and political dominance but rather the spiritual and moral power exercised by the artist, philosopher, and saint.

Until recent decades, Anglo-American writers on Nietzsche tended to be tough. Citing Nietzsche's adoption by the Nazis, these writers often deprecated his works as dangerously confused. Then, starting in the 1950s and gaining momentum in the 1960s, there was a change in perspective. Walter Kaufmann argued that Nietzsche was one of the more antifascistic and anti-anti-Semitic writers of his time (an argument generally accepted today), while Jacques Derrida and Gilles Deleuze, whose works have greatly influenced American critics, praised Nietzsche as a precursor of poststructuralism. Derrida went so far as to partly excuse Nietzsche's misogyny.

A look at the history of critical opinion on Henry James shows no such striking reversal. For more than a century, James enthusiasts have characterized his work as urbane, civilized, graceful, and mannered. James's detractors have not quarrelled with these adjectives; rather they have placed a "too" in front of them and added other adjectives such as obscure, feminine, elitist, and pompous. For example, during his lifetime, James was lionized by authors like Edith Wharton, Ford Madox Ford, and William Dean Howells, and ridiculed (on occasion) by H. G. Wells, George Bernard Shaw, and Mark Twain. Ignored during the twenties and thirties, his reputation skyrocketed in the forties and fifties with the ascendency of New Criticism. Philip Rahv,

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although no James enthusiast, crystallized prevailing sentiment when he pronounced James the prototypical "paleface," contrasting him with "redskin" Walt Whitman.

Few Jamesians since that time have done much to whoop it up. The consensus has been that paleface James falls within the romantic tradition of Emersonian transcendentalism and Coleridgean subjectivism. James's preoccupations, it is maintained, lie within; his focus is on the individual consciousness and its aesthetic functions. The idea is that James, if not exactly a propagandist of Arnoldian "sweetness and light," averts his eyes from the harder realities of human existence, such as sex and politics.

Of course not all critics interpret James as romanticist. Many, for example, have related James's work to the empirical and pragmatic tradition represented by such figures as James's older brother, William. Nonetheless, comparing them has tended more to reinforce than to subvert the image of James as "tender." In line with William's own perspective on the matter, Henry has been viewed as the obscurantist younger brother of the more straightforward William.

Although such accounts of James as a drawing-room romanticist are, I think, misguided, it is not hard to understand why so many critics have accepted them. James valued aesthetic sensibilities over all others; "It is art that makes life," he said in his famous letter to H. G. Wells. Many critics have rightly observed that this dictum was a cornerstone of James's own life and work. What they have often failed to notice, however, is that the cornerstone lacks a crucial ground—the ground of the free and autonomous self. With a philosophical sophistication few critics have given him credit for, James rejected the view of the self as a separate, internalized space of thought and emotion, a view associated with Descartes and developed in opposing ways by two seminal figures: Kant, among whose romanticist heirs were Coleridge and Emerson, and Hume, among whose empiricist heirs was (to a certain extent) William James. Empiricism and romanticism, of course, differ sharply; the former treats the mind as a recipient of impressions from the external world while the latter treats the mind as playing a creative, "imaginative" role in constituting such impressions. Nonetheless, both reflect a cen-

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tral epistemological concern with the functions of the individual consciousness.

James's preoccupations, by contrast, are deeply social. It is true that he often puts a belief in individual autonomy into the mouths of such characters as *The Portrait of a Lady*'s Isabel Archer (for example, during her conversation with Madame Merle early in the novel). But he does so for the purpose of showing such belief as a temporary stage of delusion in the protagonist's tragic development. James viewed social mores, manners, and constraints not as inhibiting the expression of individuality, but rather, as George Santayana characterized James's approach, "in the classic way"—as making such individuality possible. Just as the artist becomes most an artist when he submits himself to artistic form and discipline, so too the individual becomes most an individual when he submits himself to social form and circumstance, as Isabel does when she returns to her husband Gilbert Osmond or (to cite a more powerful example) as Maggie Verver in *The Golden Bowl* does when she remakes her marriage with the Prince. In place of the romanticist and empiricist view of the self as a kind of fixed freedom or enclosed infinitude, James substituted a concept of tragedy that posits character as finite, contingent, and radically unstable due to its dependence on social, cultural, and historical forms that are themselves continually fluctuating. James's critique of the romanticist and empiricist self bears something in common with Derrida's critique of the "essential" self, although it lacks the latter's skeptical implication that the self is only a textual construct.

James's critique of the autonomous self is at once conservative and revolutionary. It is conservative in that the individual must yield his personal autonomy to the impersonality of social and aesthetic forms (hence the emphasis in Jamesian tragedy on renunciation and suffering). And it is revolutionary in that the very act of submission gives the individual the power to reshape and recreate new forms of self and freedom. It gives him the power of the artist—the power to "make life" even as he sacrifices his own. Tragedy for James is the kind of art capable of making the most life.

The centrality of tragic vision in James justifies placing him more within the Hawthornian literary tradition than within the Emersonian one. Emerson was a minister who justified his

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refusal to celebrate the Lord's supper on the basis of individual conscience and who in general regarded religious, social, and cultural constraints as "prisons" that held captive the self's inner truth. In keeping with such imagery, a large number of American novels, from Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* to Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*, have portrayed heroes who are uncommitted, unbound, and possessed of a childlike innocence that leaves them remarkably unburdened by their collective or individual past. The character of the protagonist in such novels remains relatively unchanged from beginning to end.

The Hawthornian literary tradition produced a very different sort of fiction. Hawthorne himself expressed skepticism at the idea of the autonomous self, warned against the dangers of pride and egotism, and insisted that personal rights and freedoms presupposed an affirmation of communal values. In Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, James's *The Portrait of a Lady* and *The Ambassadors*, and Flannery O'Connor and Bernard Malamud's tales, the image of being bound to or even "imprisoned" within social norms is given a positive, if tragic connotation. The protagonists of such works typically undergo a dramatic revelation or transformation of character and/or consciousness, a loss of often sexual innocence, and an awakening to what James called a "sense of the past" (the title of one of James's late novels). In contrast to works of the Emersonian tradition, in which "voice" or an oral mode of storytelling dominates the form (one thinks especially of the fiction of Mark Twain, J. D. Salinger, and Philip Roth), voice is subsumed within a larger and highly structured framework that destabilizes the character of the protagonist and makes him subject to tragic revelation.

To recognize that James was preoccupied with dramatizing such revelation to the point where he saw his own task as artist in the light of his tragic-heroic protagonists is to belie his reputation as paleface. It is to help effect a change in the climate of critical opinion about him parallel to that which occurred with Nietzsche. Just as Nietzsche was tenderized, James needs to be toughened. One way of doing this is to portray James as Nietzschean. As Stephen Donadio points out in *Nietzsche, Henry James, and the Artistic Will*, the novelist and philosopher were in many ways similar. Unfortunately, Donadio vitiates his comparison by taking as its basis James and Nietzsche's supposed

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affinity with Emersonian transcendentalism. By contrast, my view of the basis for the comparison between the two writers is that they placed a similar concept of tragedy at the center of their life and work. This concept entailed not only a rejection of the Kantian and Humean autonomous self but a recognition of the inescapability of suffering and evil and an insistence that the nineteenth-century critique of religion be extended to morals. Such insistence, for which Nietzsche is well known, is also voiced by James when he criticizes Emerson explicitly (in a late essay) and Coleridge implicitly (in "The Coxon Fund") for lacking "a definite conception of evil" and for being too complacent about the self's "goodness." James's tragedies celebrate the darker forces of existence even as they struggle to overcome them.

That there is something drastically wrong with the perspective of "tender" Jamesians is indicated by a simple fact: James saw himself as an artistic Napolean Bonaparte—an American Balzac—and indeed admired the French general more than any other historical personage. After the stroke that preceded his last illness, James dictated letters discussing the administration of the French Republic and signed one of them with the original Corsican form of Napoleon's name, 'Napoleone'. Naturally, the thought occurs that this is just another case, somewhat pathetic, of a paleface painting himself red, but no one acquainted with James's monumental literary accomplishments is likely to sustain such a thought for very long. Early in his writing life, James wrote to his family: "It is time I should rend the veil from the ferocious ambition which has always *couvé* beneath a tranquil exterior...I rather think I shall become a (sufficiently) great man." Decades later, on publication of his autobiography, James boasted to Henry Adams about his literary efforts, "Behold me so behaving." These words are reminiscent of the title of Nietzsche's last book, *Ecce Homo,* with its half-mad chapter titles, "Why I am so Wise," "Why I am a Destiny," etc. Indeed, like James, Nietzsche greatly esteemed Napoleon; was obsessed from an early age with the pursuit of his own greatness, promising "to make things as hard for myself as they have ever been for anybody"; and at the end of his life signed his letters with the names of famous military figures.

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Underlying James and Nietzsche's quest for artistic glory are remarkably similar psychological profiles. They shared family histories of madness or psychotic episodes and an affinity for "psychic" experiences, an affinity reflected in James's fiction and Nietzsche's letters. Both James and Nietzsche were somewhat isolated during childhood and grew up in households with strong female presences and weak or absent fathers (Nietzsche's father died when he was a child and James's was a cripple whom the novelist regarded, however tenderly, as a weakly romantic Emersonian). Nietzsche may have and James almost certainly remained virgins throughout their lives. Both were convinced that the artist or philosopher should be unmarried and self-consciously molded their personalities on an aristocratic model of kindness, graciousness, and modesty, going so far as to invent an element of nobility in their ancestries. Both men were at bottom domineering, yet possessed only one real outlet for their aggression: art.

James and Nietzsche, in sum, were artistic megalomaniacs. To an extent rarely equalled in literature, they channelled themselves into their work. Indeed, if the two writers are to be regarded as nonromantic, it must be admitted that there is something romantic in the force and energy with which they speak to us, something unclassical and unrestrained in the devouring intensity of their preoccupation with the phenomenon of self-consciousness. In James, the tidal wave of this consciousness not only surges through his late novels, stories, and essays but roars with equal force through his treatment, in his *Autobiography*, of the minutiae of his childhood and adolescence, as well as through his casual conversations late in life with friends and acquaintances. As for Nietzsche, all his books starting with *Human, All-Too-Human,* bear witness to a man engaged in a sort of life-and-death dialogue with himself, a dialogue that is intense, all-absorbing, and stretched thin over turbulent waters. As Nietzsche said, "Every art and every philosophy may be considered a remedy and aid in the service of growing and struggling life...'my philosophy'...is another word for what persecutes me right into the roots of my being." Similarly, James speaks of his task as artist as "nothing less than [turning] myself inside out." The works of both are possessed of the power of the personal; their lives seem to be fashioned in the image of their labors.

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It is for this reason that Rahv's contrast of paleface James and redskin Whitman was the reverse of felicitous. On the one hand, the mature James greatly esteemed Whitman as poet and man, notwithstanding a harshly critical essay about Whitman written very early in James's career. On the other hand, James identified himself not with palefaces but with the American Indians. He did so, moreover, in the context of a devastating social and cultural indictment of the United States—*The American Scene.* Like Nietzsche, the prophesizer of "the fight for the dominion of the earth," James showed (as Leon Edel has pointed out) remarkable prescience in his political and cultural commentary, especially that pertaining to the future of England and the United States.

My point is not that James should be regarded as a writer oriented toward social and political reform but rather that his relationship to such concerns was far more complex than the usual image of him implies. Born in 1843 and 1844 respectively, James and Nietzsche lived during a time when the relationship of the artist and intellectual to his cultural milieu was being radically transformed. "With the fall of the aristocratic world," Leon Schucking said, there developed "a conception of artistic creative work in which no regard was paid to the existing public and the writer had in view only the ideal reader." The changed conception was to result in the cult of *l'art pour l'art,* exemplified in England by Walter Pater and Oscar Wilde, and in Germany by Stefan George. That James and Nietzsche were (and still sometimes are) associated with these figures is not surprising. Both saw themselves, especially during their late periods, as writing for an elite. Nonetheless, their aestheticism was balanced by an equally strong affinity for a classical ideal of wholeness of character championed by Goethe and Arnold. Whether in James's cosmopolitanism or Nietzsche's notion of the "Good European," there is projected a sort of nineteenth-century Renaissance man, an aristocratic notion of the strong, integrated personality who does not separate art from life but appropriates both for his own self-expression. Nietzsche's hostility toward the specialized science of German philology and James's disdain for the abstract philosophizing of his brother reflect their view that knowledge is useful only when put in the service of life. The conservatism of the two writers is illustrated by their tendency—a tendency shared by Arnold and Goethe—to despise the "equality" cham-

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pioned in the French Revolution while lauding the potential for "freedom" which that revolution gave birth to.

James, of course, was no Arnold, and Nietzsche,still less,no Goethe. Both were in the grip of an intense, fragmenting aestheticism that made their ideal of wholeness a nonorganic one. For each, the seed from which character and consciousness spring rests not on the "natural" soil of self but on a historically contingent, artificially fertilized soil, continuously being laid down even as it gains the capacity to act on and become a new form of "nature." Crucial to the concept of self for both is the role of deception, artifice, performance, and play-acting, a concept that strikes at the heart of the modernist notion of the self as autonomous, privatized, and essential.

James and Nietzsche's concept of the aesthetic, like James's concept of self referred to here in my opening, is both conservative and revolutionary. It is conservative in its emphasis on wholeness and revolutionary in its refusal to give such wholeness a natural or metaphysical basis. The distinctive feature of such revolutionary conservatism is tragic affirmation. Both Nietzsche and James were saturated in classical and Shakespearean tragedy from an early age; their lifelong struggle to formulate a new aesthetic, traditional yet radical, was played out in the artistic language of tragedy. Nietzsche even called himself "the first tragic philosopher." But if that is the case, then James deserves to be called the first tragic novelist. The implications of the latter's notion of tragedy are no less philosophically profound than those of Nietzsche's.

In his first major work, *The Birth of Tragedy,* Nietzsche attacked what might be called "rationalistic" accounts of tragedy. The principal characteristic of such accounts is that they offer justification for the suffering of the hero by reconciling him to some existing social, moral, or religious order. Such justification might take the form of a fortunate fall in which the hero recognizes his guilt or at least his mistake and undergoes a redemptive process. What Nietzsche objected to about these accounts, whose source he traced to Socrates and the *deus ex machina* device of Euripides, is that they see tragedy as explaining rather than showing its meaning; such accounts approach tragedy as though it were a problem to be solved rather than an action to be rendered. They posit a preestablished form or object, such as a heav-

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enly paradise, a worldly happiness, or an ideal of personal autonomy, to which the justification or explanation can refer. For Nietzsche, by contrast, tragedy enacts an action that carries its justification within itself. Like James, Nietzsche demanded that tragedy have a revolutionary capacity—the capacity to "make" life, to create new social, cultural, and aesthetic forms. For this purpose, it must have no *fixed* moral or epistemological bound.

The concept of tragedy Nietzsche proposed in *The Birth of Tragedy* as an alternative to the tragedy of rationalization was pessimistic (influenced by Schopenhauer) and dualistic, revolving around the conflict between the Apollonian principle of individuation and poetic illusion and the Dionysian principle of oneness and aesthetic redemption through music. The general argument of *The Birth of Tragedy* is of little concern here. Suffice to say that the mature Nietzsche severely criticized his argument (in a later preface) because it appealed to the "metaphysical comfort" that tragedy could provide—an appeal sharply at odds with the polemic against justification and explanation that characterizes other sections of the work.

In certain respects, Nietzsche's thinking in *The Birth of Tragedy* parallels that of James in his early and middle period works, *Roderick Hudson* and *The Princess Casamassima.* These works are dualistic (in that both portray a character who is torn apart psychically by opposite, irreconcilable forces) and pessimistic (in that both characters commit suicide at the end of the novels). Although among the more depressing of James's works, neither are "tragic" in the way the later novels are because in them the struggle for freedom is to a large extent a struggle against social forms and conditions. In both cases, the idea (if not the reality) of personal autonomy is preserved and serves to justify and explain the fates of the characters. Like Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy*, James at this stage was still partly in the grip of a metaphysical aesthetic that derives ultimately from Kant's autonomous self.

In Nietzsche and James's later works, a different conception of tragedy emerges. Nietzsche called this new conception "affirmative" (in part to distinguish it from his earlier Schopenhauerian ideas). It centers around an avowedly moral—though hardly moralistic—category, the Will to Power.

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Nietzsche usually used the term, "Will to Power," to connote the tendency of life forms to struggle with and dominate other life forms. But he didn't conceive of such domination in Darwinian terms. On the contrary, the genesis of the term is associated with Nietzsche's realization that life was *not* a struggle for survival. Accordingly, those who exemplify the Will to Power most fully are—as tender Nietzscheans rightly point out—the artist, philosopher, and saint.

Nietzsche's concept of the Will to Power cannot be understood apart from his distinction between two different types of morality. The first type he regarded as a straightforward, healthy expression of the Will to Power, associating it with aristocratic, ruling classes and creative thinkers and artists; it was an "active," "master" morality, a "creator" morality, a morality founded on the affirmation of "good" and the positing of "bad" as that which differs from the good. What is "bad," in this perspective, is dependent on what is "good," which can in turn be defined as an action or deed expressing the Will to Power. The second type of morality, sometimes referred to as "slave morality," Nietzsche regarded as a twisted, "resentful" expression of the Will to Power, associating it with metaphysical, especially Christian dualism and all protest movements, democratic, socialistic, or fascistic. This morality of *ressentiment* was a morality founded on negation, on the positing of "evil" and the construction of "good" as the opposite of evil. In such a perspective, the act of rejection, the positing of evil, comes first. Indeed, according to Nietzsche, many reactive moralities of *ressentiment* have historically labelled "evil" what active, master moralities posited as "good." Here we see the origin of Nietzsche's invocation that we affirm "evil"; he means the evil which modern, reactive morality has associated with both the sensuous sphere of nature and the cultural realm of history.

Judged from the standpoint of Nietzsche's later work, the Schopenhauerian analysis of *The Birth of Tragedy* is strongly infected with elements of a "reactive" morality. The notion that there is a metaphysical (Dionysian) sphere lying behind the phenomenal (Apollonian) world of appearance is indicative of a morality that has fashioned its concept of good out of what is "not evil"; its concept of truth out of what is "not false"; and its concept of beauty out of what is "not merely sensuous." Only through

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their essential negativity, their inactiveness, can goodness, truth, and beauty be, in Kantian and Schopenhauerian fashion, "disinterested." The very notion of a self standing apart from its conditions and circumstances is the product of slave morality—the product of a fear to take the plunge into the flux of life. For the later Nietzsche, by contrast, tragic affirmation is active and "interested"; it must therefore embrace that "spiritualization of cruelty" we call culture and history. That is why Nietzsche insists that even suffering and death be affirmed: they are a part of life and life is all there is. Tragic affirmation, in sum, is a pure positivity, one that does not rely on grounds outside itself but makes its grounds, lays down a new soil of meaning, by the very acts through which it becomes manifest.

It is just this tragedy of affirmation that is reflected in James's late novels. As Maggie Verver of *The Golden Bowl* puts it, "...when you love only a little you're naturally not jealous...But when you love in a deeper and more intense way, then you are, in the same proportion, jealous...When, however, you love in the most abysmal and unutterable way of all—why then you're beyond everything, and nothing can pull you down." There is neither foundation nor ceiling to Maggie's love. It does not have a goal, a beginning or end point outside itself to which it could refer. The act of loving is all.

A less sentimental, less romanticized love is scarcely imaginable. Maggie's is a constructed, a performed and artistic love, a love which constitutes a sort of truthful illusion that carries the force of passion and life. It is a love that reminds us of "the deep human expertness in [artist] Gloriani's charming smile—oh the terrible life behind it" in *The Ambassadors.* Following the presentation of Maggie's ahistorical and romantic Americanism, *The Golden Bowl* enacts the intimate intrusion, the slow-motion onslaught of evil, duplicity, and sensuousness upon her character and imagination. Maggie is invaded by history, by what both James and Nietzsche regarded as the "cruelties" and "rapacities" on which "the fabric of civilization" is based. What we witness is Maggie opening herself up to such forces, taking them into herself, and using them to weave the fabric of a new truth, a new good, a new beauty. By receiving evil into herself, she simultaneously shields it from others, accomplishing what Milly Theale, in *The Wings of the Dove,* does in a different way: the carv-

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ing out of the conceptual horizons under which others live. These "others," who include Kate Croy and Densher, Charlotte Stant and the Prince, embody a reactive morality of *ressentiment* that sees happiness (goodness, truth, beauty) as the opposite of pain, suffering, and death. By contrast, for James's tragic protagonists, pain, suffering, and death are the relative lack of joy, passion, and life and constitute the materials out of which new forms of life are constructed and tragically affirmed. All of James's late tragedies, as well as *The Portrait of a Lady*, enact the victory of an active morality over a reactive one. For example, by the end of *The Golden Bowl*, Maggie has triumphed to the extent of enclosing her husband within the boundaries of her consciousness. That is why he says: "See? I see nothing but you." This declaration is followed by the last sentence of the novel, which employs terminology used by Aristotle in characterizing the nature of tragedy: "And the truth of it had, with this force, after a moment, so strangely lighted his eyes that, as for pity and dread of them, she buried her own in his breast." Maggie's "pity" is prompted by her realization that her domination, the enclosure of her husband, has become complete. Her "dread," on the other hand, is prompted by her realization that in the process of absorbing and "taking" him she has absorbed and "given" herself. The act by which she has determined him has determined herself; her complete domination of him is indistinguishable from her complete submission to him. She has imposed herself on fate by sacrificing herself to it. She has, in Nietzsche's Hegelian formulation, become what she is.

And so it is also with James as artist; language is for him a creating power that is exercised only by submission. In his *Notebooks*, he often lapses into the first person singular in describing the perceptions and emotions of his characters, like a director or playwright who, during the rehearsal of a play, suddenly leaps on stage to show the actors how it should be done. Maggie is in this sense a performed, an enacted self-portrait. She shows James in the process of his own self-construction. "To surrender oneself," he wrote, "to live in the world of creation—to get into it and stay in it...this is the only thing."

To grasp the significance of James's conception of art as simultaneous self-surrender and self-mastery, it is necessary to understand that Jamesian tragedy was to a large extent the prod-

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uct of the style of writing he developed to execute it. Prior to the late tragedies, James wrote *The Aspern Papers, The Turn of the Screw,* and *The Sacred Fount.* The lesson James taught himself in these works was a form of artistic antiromanticism: the lesson that consciousness cannot create itself and that the effort to do so results—most vividly in the case of the narrator of *The Sacred Fount*—in nihilism. Through these first-person narrated works, James unmasked the delusion of the essential, autonomous self. Yet it is precisely such a delusion on which narrator-mediated, representational fiction is based. The narrator of such fiction is an author-narrator; he or she has one foot in the "real world" and the other foot in the fictional one. Our capacity to project ourselves, fancifully or otherwise, into the world of such novels depends on our acceptance of such a dual role, which in turn depends on a tremendous faith in the power of the authorial consciousness to create out of itself and its processes—like Athena from the head of Zeus—a representatively complete world that mirrors the real one.

James's ability to develop a genuinely tragic form of novel is founded on a rejection of these assumptions. For the later James, "realistic" representation is relegated to the act of artistic creation. The subject of the novel is not external reality, but the possibilities of experience, both internal and external to the author, which permeate him. The author's imagination is the medium in which those possibilities swim. And since this medium is bounded—bounded, that is, by the limits of the artist's vision—the act of artistic creation is a plot of the author's own consciousness. Art is a form of action in which consciousness is constructed.

Such action requires a framework—the framework of tragedy. The framework is created neither by author nor reader but handed down to both in the form of a kind of inherited fund of the imagination paid in over the course of history (including that of literature). To follow these tragedies, we must accordingly draw from that fund; the action we are presented with is not a narrator-mediated stream of events whose outcome is unknown, but an action whose basic parameters we already "know," and which we are invited to participate in and experience. Moreover, the same structure or represented range of reality that enables the reader to project himself into the novel enables the author to do likewise. By placing himself artistically under a canopy of con-

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sciousness, "Henry James" accomplished his own self-construction. The framework of tragedy is the locus of the making of self. This self is enacted, not explained; it is a pure positivity, ungrounded in negation and gaining its power and freedom from its submission and constraint. As Nietzsche said, artists know "only too well that precisely when they no longer do anything 'voluntarily' but do everything of necessity, their feeling of freedom, subtlety, full power...reaches its peak...that necessity and 'freedom of the will' then become one in them." The source of the "active" morality embodied in James's tragic heroines and heroes is the self-submitting, self-creating artistic action of James himself.

Such artistic action has a special quality. In the preface to *The Golden Bowl*, James enunciates a notion of art as a form of "doing," a doing that is not *essentially* different from other kinds of conduct (as aestheticists would have it) but relatively better in certain respects: "Our literary deeds enjoy this marked advantage over many of our acts, that, though they go forth into the world and stray in the desert, they don't to the same extent lose themselves...our really 'done' things of this superior and more appreciable order [are]...essentially traceable...All of which means for him [the artist] conduct with a vengeance, since it is conduct minutely and publicly attested."

Here we uncover the heart of James's persistence in a use of language that exasperated his contemporaries and still mystifies many today. I mean less his so-called "convoluted" style than his tendency to keep the reference or object of what is being said in abeyance—to continually defer meaning. This practice can be compared to James's refusal, in *The Ambassadors*, to name the industry on which the Newsome fortune is based. James did not want to cut off a potentially rich source of associations by fixing his meaning in some arbitrary object denoted by a name. He was apparently convinced that to fix the particular economic "cause" of the Newsomes' kind of life and way of thinking would distract attention from the more encompassing social, cultural, and psychological description he wished to give. One may be skeptical of such a view (as I am), but it at least illuminates a crucial motive behind James's stylistic practice of keeping the "reference" of his sentences fuzzy. He wanted to create meaning, to contribute to "that more appreciable order" of art, not

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merely to indicate a preestablished order whose meaning could be exhausted in the act of being referred to. Only by paying attention to the manifold distinctions connoted by words did James feel he could create characters who *feel* and *think* about themselves and others very hard. And he wanted them to feel and think very hard in order to express his sense that the most important arena of life—the place where the crucial events of our lives take place, and where we have the potential to demonstrate to the highest degree courage, intelligence, and integrity—is the arena of our personal and social relations. James felt that we live only to the degree we "exceed" ourselves, only to the degree we invest our hearts and minds in the hearts and minds of others and undergo a process of revolutionary self-transformation. He did not disvalue the life of adventure in an external sense, but he wanted to make clear where he felt one's highest priorities should lie: what he felt was the center of life from which outward "adventure" and day-to-day life gained (or lost) its value. In *The Middle Years,* James says, "Frustration's only life...it's what passes." What does not pass is the passion, beauty, and glory of life as captured in tragic art.

I think that this is essentially what Nietzsche was trying to convey through his concept of Eternal Recurrence. The concept restores to life the eternalizing capacity which romantic aesthetics had claimed for art. But as Heidegger, Deleuze, and Strong have all argued, Eternal Recurrence is not cyclical. It does not posit a self-contained element that disappears and returns; there is no distinction between what a person is and what a person does. Rather, character is fate, ripeness all. Eternity subsists in the continually recurring acts that affirm character and consciousness in the face of annihilation. These acts constitute art and art is nothing more than life at its most intense, at its most fully felt and thought. Eternal Recurrence thus posits an eternity without *underlying* reality, ungrounded in certainty or even sanity. As James has his artist-hero say in "The Middle Years": "A second chance—that's the delusion. There never was to be but one. We work in the dark—we do what we can—we give what we have. Our doubt is our passion and our passion is our task. The rest is the madness of art."

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Doris Lessing

ON SALMAN RUSHDIE: A COMMUNICATION

Dear William,

You say you assume I am "stirred" by the Rushdie affair. I hope I am not. Far too many people are "stirred" and vanish into quicksands of hysteria. People I have respected for years as monuments of common sense start emoting in print and on television: there is something in this affair that brings out the worst....

I am an admirer of Salman Rushdie. But when I was sent *The Satanic Verses* I could hardly read it, finding it turgid. I therefore set myself down and reread *Midnight's Children* and *Shame* and found them everything I did before. I decided I would look forward to his next book and forget about *The Satanic Verses.* Then this storm broke.

I have thought Appeals from various bodies emotive and ill-considered, though I signed one of them. The alternative was to frame one of my own, but we who were unhappy with the official Appeals could not do that. One has to support what I suppose we can describe as our trade unions, the Society of Authors, P.E.N., other representative bodies. The main point was, however, made: we support freedom of speech and thought.

This is one of those situations where it is impossible to do right. People who refused to go on television have been accused of cowardice, but they were afraid of the oversimplifications of television. The thousand or so people who signed the big Appeal were described by a distraught Moslem as being "rent-a-signature." If you say you do not admire the book but admire the author, then you are accused of being unsympathetic to his situation. If you say perhaps he should not have written it, then you

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Editor's Note: This statement is in response to a letter from William Phillips to Doris Lessing about the Rushdie affair.

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are against freedom of speech. Salman is reported to have written this book specifically to provoke the fundamentalists, and to air their bigotries. Would he have written it if he had known he would provoke them to this extent? That seems to me a key question, but the answer may have to wait until things have calmed down a bit. If they do. Salman was brought up in a family where the English influence was strong, has been in England since he was a child, at an English public school, and then university. Nothing has been more instructive than to see him on television, and then to see some representative of Islam: two parallel lines, two worlds that don't touch, two sets of assumptions, two civilizations.

The tragedy is that the worst of Islam is being put forward as all of Islam: emotions not felt since the Crusades are surfacing. Yet Khomeini and what he stood for is loathed by most of the Islamic world, which regards his death threats outside Islamic law. Khomeini was, to use old-fashioned language, a wicked man. His rule was marked by mass killings in the prisons, of women and children as well as of men, by mass tortures, by arbitrary arrest—a reign of terror. To say nothing of that terrible war and its cynical brutalities. You could not find a more barbaric regime anywhere in the world. Yet you heard ignorant people talking as if this evil old man and his junta represented Islam, soft-minded people saying that if we believe in freedom of thought we must listen to him. It would help if other Islamic countries would speak out, not only a brave individual here and there. Those of us who have Moslem friends know what they think. This united front of Islam goes back to the Christian-Saracen Wars, long centuries of them. Surely it is time these frozen attitudes should thaw and new links be made between Christian civilizations and Islamic ones. It is not impossible: the past shows it is not. Once, in Spain, under the Caliphs, in Cordova and Toledo and Seville and other great Islamic cities, Moslem and Christian and Jewish poets and savants lived and worked together, and the civilization they made inspired and influenced all Europe.

Meanwhile, the Rushdie affair rolls on. It has done great damage to this country. People working in the community for better relations with our local Moslems—there are two million of them—say they have been set back ten years, more. It is as if

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some incomprehensible, alien force has suddenly arisen in our country, and yet it has to be assimilated, accommodated, made part of our culture. I am sure we will do it. When the hysteria has died down. Sometimes it seems as if the whole phenomenon is on some wavelength of unreason, irrationality, that attracts and inflames the like: which does not make it easier to write this letter....

Yours,
Doris Lessing

Coming in

Partisan Review

- Amos Oz: *Reflections on the Holocaust*
- Julia Kristeva on the French Revolution
- Raymond Aron: *A Memoir*
- Jed Perl on Salvador Dali
- William Phillips: *The Function of Criticism Today*
- Stanislaw Baranczak on Joseph Brodsky
- Dan Segre: *Israeli Letter*
- Edith Kurzweil on the Freudians
- Fiction by Alan Lelchuk
- Paul Hollander on Fellow Travellers
- Herbert Gold: *Selfish Like Me*
- Nathan Glazer on Life in the Bronx

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FICTION

I. L. Peretz

IN THE MAIL WAGON

He told me everything at once, in a single breath; within minutes I learned that his name is Chaim, that he is Yona Hrubeshover's son-in-law, Berl Konskivoler's son, and that the wealthy Merenstein from Lublin is related to him, an uncle on his mother's side. This uncle, he gave me to understand, has an almost goyish household; perhaps he doesn't go so far as to eat non-kosher food, but he himself saw him sit down to a meal without first washing his hands, as prescribed by ritual.

They are, he intimated, very strange people: they have long towels laid out on the steps; before entering the house one has to ring a bell; everywhere inside there are painted towels...people sit as if they are in jail, walk about stealthily like thieves...it is as silent as, God preserve us, among the deaf...

His first wife has the same kind of family in Warsaw, but he never visits them, the beggars.—"What use are they to me? Eh?"

His uncle in Lublin may be lax in observing God's commandments, but at least he is rich. Nu, you rub against a fat person, some of the fat rubs off; chopping wood leaves splinters, at a feast one can lick a bone...but there, paupers!

He even expects that in time the Lublin uncle will give him a job. Business, he complains, is not good. These days he deals in eggs; he buys them in the villages and sends them on to Lublin. From there they are shipped to London. They say that in London they put them in a kiln until chicks hatch..."It must be a lie...the English must simply like eggs!" But in any case, business is bad...

Still, it's better than dealing in grains. Grains are completely dead. Right after his wedding he became a grain dealer. Since

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he was a Yeshiva student they found a partner for him, an old merchant who talked him to death and simply lorded it over him....

* * *

It was dark in the mail coach; I could not see Chaim's face, and to this day I don't understand how he knew that I was a Jew...when he entered, I was sitting in the corner, dozing...I might have given a Jewish sigh. Perhaps he felt that my sigh had an affinity with his.

He told me that his wife comes from Warsaw, that even now she dislikes Konskivala...

-She was born, you understand, in Hrubeshov, but she was raised in Warsaw, by her "unkosher" family—she was an orphan...In Warsaw she tasted other things. She knows Polish, she can read German addresses fluently, she even claims to play an instrument, not a fiddle, but some other kind of instrument...

-And who are you?—he asks, suddenly clutching my hand.

I gave up trying to sleep and, I must admit, he began to interest me. A story about a young man from a small town...Something might come of this, I think to myself. I must get more details, add something of my own to the plot, and I will have a novel...I will put in a convicted robber, mix in a few bankruptcies, throw in a dragon for good measure; it might even be interesting.

I bend over towards my neighbor and tell him who I am.

-Oho!—he says—so it's you, of all people...Be kind enough to tell me, won't you, where a man gets the time and the patience to think up stories?...

-You see for yourself.

-How do I know? You might have inherited a bundle and are living on the interest.

-God forbid! My parents are both alive, may they live to a hundred and twenty...

-Then you must have won the lottery.

-Not that, either...

-Then what?

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I honestly did not know what to answer him...

-And you make a living from this?

I give the typical Jewish answer: Beh!

-And your entire income comes from writing?

-Right now...

-Ah! Tell me. What do you get out of it?

-Not much.

-Also slow?

-Dead...

-Times are bad—my neighbor sighs.

For a few minutes there was silence; but my travelling companion could not remain quiet for long.

-Tell me, I beg you, what good are these stories? I don't mean yours, of course—he quickly corrects himself—God forbid! A Jew must earn a living. Even if he has to squeeze it out of the bare walls...there's no question...what doesn't a Jew do for a living? Take my case, for example. I had no other choice but to go by mail coach, and only God knows if I am not, at this very moment, sitting on a ritually forbidden cloth mixture. But I mean the readers. What do they get out of these stories? Is there anything of value in them? What do you write in your books?

He doesn't wait for a reply but answers his own questions.

-It must be something for women, a crinoline.

-And you—I ask him—have you never read these kind of books?

-To you I will admit the truth. I do happen to know something about them...this much...

He probably indicated the tip of his finger, the nail and a bit of the flesh above it...it was dark.

-Did it capture your interest?

-Mine? God forbid! I read them for my wife's sake. This is what happened: it was five or six years ago, six years, a year after our wedding...we were still being supported by her family while I studied at Yeshiva...and something happened to my wife; she was not herself. Not that she was actually sick, God forbid. She was up and about, but she was not in the best of health. Once, when I asked her what was wrong...But—and he suddenly drew back—why am I bothering you with these things?

-Not at all—I say to him—tell me, my friend...

My travelling companion laughs.

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-Does one bring straw to Egypt? You don't need my stories...surely you can think up better ones on your own.

-Go on, friend, tell me...

-Is it that you write lies for others and want the truth for yourself?

It doesn't even occur to him that one might write the truth!

-Whatever you say...

* * *

Nu—my neighbor begins his story—it's nothing to be ashamed of. We lived in a separate room. I was a young man, more ready to talk about these things, so I asked her what was troubling her. She began to sob...I was filled with pity for her. Not only is she my wife, may the Evil Eye have no power over her and may she live, please God, for a hundred and twenty years, but she is also an orphan...far from home and lonesome.

-What do you mean lonesome?—I wonder out loud.

-You must understand that my mother, may God grant her peace, died a year before I married, and my father, may God grant him peace, never took another wife. My mother, may her merits preserve us, was a pious woman, and my father could not forget her...Nu, a young wife alone in the house...my father with never any time to spare...he spent almost the entire week in the villages; he dealt in produce, anything you might think of, eggs, butter, old clothes, pig's bristles, canvas.

-And you?

-I was always in the Yeshiva, studying Torah...Nu, a young wife alone, I figured she was frightened...But how to account for her crying? "No, it's not that," she says, "I am bored"...Bored? I don't even know what that means...I saw that she walked about like in a trance. Sometimes when I talked to her she didn't hear me, sometimes she looked at the wall, lost in thought, just staring and staring...sometimes she moved her lips but not a sound came out...What is it to be bored? Something for women only, no doubt. A man is not bored...a man has no time to be bored. A man is either hungry or full, he is involved in business affairs, or he is

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in the study house, or he sleeps...if he has an extra minute, he smokes a pipe...but bored?

-Don't forget—I tell him—a woman doesn't study Talmud, she takes no part in public affairs, she isn't even responsible for carrying out the six hundred and thirteen precepts...

-That's the point, exactly! I soon understood that being bored meant having nothing to do, a kind of idleness that can drive a person mad. Our rabbis long ago understood this in a spiritual sense...do you read the more abstruse commentaries?? "Idleness leads to boredom!" According to Jewish law a woman is not permitted to be idle. So I said to her: do something! She wants to "read" she told me. Reading was also a strange concept to me, even though there were already Jews among us, especially those who had learned to write in the profane tongue, who "read" books and newspapers instead of "studying" sacred texts. At that time I did not yet know how educated she was...she spoke to me even less than I spoke to her! She is quite a tall woman, but she used to hold her head down and her lips pressed together as if she couldn't count to two...a quiet person, a sheep. And her face always looked strained and worried, as if a ship full of her dairy products had sunk..."I want," she says, "to read." Read what? Polish, German...even the Yiddish translation of the Bible, so long as she reads...And here, in Konskivala, there is not even the shadow of a book! I felt so sorry for her that I couldn't deny her this...so I promised her that when I went to the uncle in Lublin I would pick up some books for her...

-Don't you have any?—she asks.

-I? God forbid!

-Then what do you do all day in the study house?

-I study!

-I, too, want to study—she declares.

-I make it clear to her that Talmud is not a story book, that it is not meant for women, that the Gemora even teaches that women may not study Talmud, that it is holy...but nothing helped. If the people of Konskivalia had known, they would have stoned me. And they would have been right! I won't go into all the details...I'll be brief. She begged me, she cried, she swooned, she carried on for so long that I finally gave in. I used to translate a page of Gemora for her each evening...but I knew from the beginning how it would end...

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-And how did it end?

-Don't ask! I translated a page of "The Four Categories of Damages"...the ox, the pit, the grazing animal, and the incendiary...together with the commentaries of Rashi, the Tossafos, and the Maharasha...I recited the lesson in the traditional singsong, and she fell asleep as I read to her, night after night...It is not for women! I had a stroke of luck when, in the great blizzard which took place that year, a peddler strayed into Konskivalia. I bought a whole crate of story books from him...Now the situation became reversed...She read to me and I fell asleep. To this very day—he continued—I can't understand what there is in these stories. Men surely won't find anything in them! Tell me, do you write only for women?

* * *

Meanwhile daylight broke...My neighbor's sallow, long, thin face became visible in the dimly lit carriage...and so did his black, tired, bloodshot eyes.

Apparently he wanted to go to the front of the wagon to say the morning prayers; he was wiping the mist from the mail-coach window when I interrupted him.

-Please don't take offense, my friend, but tell me, is your wife content now?

-What do you mean content?

-Is she no longer bored?

-These days she has a stall with salt and herring...one child at the breast...two to comb and to wash...just wiping noses keeps her busy all day...

He continues to clean the window pane, and I disturb him again.

-Tell me, my friend, what does your wife look like?

My neighbor stands up, glances at me sideways, scrutinizes me from head to toe, and asks me harshly:

-Say, do you know my wife, from Warsaw perhaps, eh?

-Of course not—I answer him—I only ask so that if, by chance, I get to Konskivalia I might recognize her...

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-You want to be able to recognize her?—he smiles, reassured—all right! Here is a sign: she has a mole on the left side of her nose.

* * *

The man climbed down from the mail coach and did not say goodbye until he reached the bottom step, from a distance, and coldly. Apparently he suspected me of being acquainted with his wife and perhaps even of belonging to her "unkosher" family in Warsaw!

I was left alone in the coach, but sleep was out of the question now. The early morning air enveloped me; my literary coat was padded with wind and the cool morning crept into every limb. I moved to the back and huddled in a corner. Outside, the sun began to shine. It is possible that I rode through a breathtakingly scenic area; the first rays of the sun may have kissed the upmost peaks of the tree—lined hills and danced across a blue, crystal clear river...but I did not have the courage to open the little window...a Jewish writer has respect for the cold. I sat and began to plot out a story...but other thoughts intervened.

Two separate worlds, a man's world and a woman's world...a world of the talmudic "Four Categories of Damages," and a world of story books, which one buys by the carton.

When he reads, she falls asleep; when she reads, he falls asleep...not enough to have different sects...not enough that we classify people according to French noses, English canes, German hunters, Lithuanian pigs, Polish beggars, Eretz Yisrael wanderers...not enough that every part of the body lies in another area and has a different ring to its name...not enough that every one of these parts separates further into different sections: Chassidim, Misnagdim, Yekkes...but we are also split into males and females...so that in each and every narrow, damp, squalid Jewish home there are two distinct worlds...

When he reads, she falls asleep, when she reads, he falls asleep.

At the least, I think, we ought to unite the two worlds...It is every Yiddish writer's duty...but Yiddish writers have too many

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personal responsibilities...if, at least, one had a prop to one's income!

* * *

The driver interrupted my ruminations on income by several sharp tugs on the reins. I did not get down from the coach. It became a bit warmer; the sun began to show that she is not ungenerous.

Another passenger joined me in the coach, and in the morning light, I could see him clearly. I even recognized him. He was an old acquaintance of mine...As children we used to slide on the ice together and often played at making mud-pies; we were almost best friends...Afterwards, I went to the dark and grimy boys' school, the Cheder, and he went to the light and emancipated Gymnasium.

When I didn't know the lesson I was whipped; when I revealed a particularly good grasp of the basic questions with which the commentators dealt, I received a pinch on the cheek. One was as painful as the other. Sometimes he received the highest grades; at other times he was locked up for punishment. I broke my head over talmudic legal problems, and he broke his teeth on Greek and Latin. All this time we remained inseparable. We were neighbors. Secretly he taught me to read languages other than Hebrew, and he lent me books. As adolescents, lying on the grass by the river, we made plans to change the world. I intended to invent a powder which could be shot over a great distance, as much as a hundred miles; he, a balloon which could fly to the stars, so that we could introduce order there, too. We felt great pity for the wretched world, which had somehow got stuck in the mire —how were we to drag it out? A wagon with ungreased wheels, with lazy horses, and the driver asleep!

Afterwards, I got married and he left for the university. We didn't correspond. I heard that something went wrong; his plan to become a doctor never materialized and he became a druggist instead, somewhere in a small town...

As he entered the coach I almost shouted for joy; my heart warmed with pleasure, my hands reached out to him, my whole

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body bent towards him, yet I controlled myself, with all my strength I held back.

-It's unbelievable—I think. It really is Janec Polnievsky, the town administrator's son; it really is my old friend who wanted to embrace the whole world and kiss each part, except for the disgusting warts which needed to be excised! But who can tell these days? Perhaps he has become anti-Semitic; perhaps we Jews are today's warts which have to be excised from Europe's beautiful nose. Perhaps he will survey me with a pair of cold eyes, even hug and kiss me, but say that I am different from the other Jews...

But I was mistaken. Polnievsky recognized me and fell on my neck, and before I even had time to discuss it with him, he asked me what I thought of the fateful anti-Semitism...

* * *

-It is—he says, in Polish of course—it's a kind of cholera, an epidemic...

-Some say that it is political...

-Don't believe it—Polnievsky declares—politics doesn't create new realities. It can only take advantage of those that exist, suppress some parts and intensify others. It can blow up a tiny spark and turn it into an inferno; but it can't kindle a new spark. Human nature, not politics, spins the thread of history. Politics twists, turns, ties in knots, and entangles them. Anti-Semitism is a disease, and politics stands by the sickbed like the stupid, bad doctor who wants to prolong the illness...Politics makes use of anti-Semitism: a stone flies in the air, so Bismarck's assistant directs it into the window of the synagogue; if not, other windows would break. A protesting fist is raised, so they shove an emaciated, stooped, Jewish back under it; if not other bones would crack...But the stone, the fist, the hate exist independently...Who dies because of physical collapse? Weak children, old and feeble men and women, sick people. Who succumbs to a moral dilemma? The spoiled child, the effete aristocrat, and a few madmen who jump out and lead the sick group in a wild dance! Only healthy minds endure!

-How many healthy minds do we have?—I ask.

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-How many? Very few, unfortunately—answers Polnievsky.

We were both sadly silent. I do not know what my travelling companion was thinking. I was thinking that even healthy and strong minds are affected. There are at least two sides to the story: sometimes the crowd drags the ablest and most intelligent with it...The leader of the masses is a Columbus who seeks a new destiny for mankind, a new America...As soon as bread and water become scarce, the ship's crew mutinies and takes the helm...as a first step, someone must be slaughtered. One must both eat and quell the outrage...

* * *

-And don't think—Polnievsky interrupts my sad thoughts—that I flatter myself into thinking that I am the powerful spirit that can resist the epidemic, that I am a tall cedar which no storm can move...No, brother—he continues—I am no hero. I might have been just the same as the others, the wind might have plucked me, too, and blown me about in the air, like a decayed leaf from the tree of knowledge. I might have believed, just like all the decayed leaves, that there was a fall, that we dance in a frenzy of desire, that the wind is our hired musician who accompanies us on his pipe...I was saved by a coincidence...I became acquainted with a Jewish woman...Listen to this!

I bent towards my travelling companion; his face had become even more earnest and grim; he leaned his elbows on his knees and pressed his head into his hands...

-And don't think—he tells me—that I met a hero out of a novel, a steely character who breaks fences and walls and then goes proudly on his way; don't think of the exceptional man either, or of the intellectual with new ideas, or of ideals at all...No, I met a simple Jewish woman, one of the better class, but of the unfortunates of that class. I fell in love with her, this is the truth. And when I hear or read something bad about Jews, she floats out of my memory and with her limpid, melancholy eyes implores: don't believe it, I am not like that!

He becomes lost in thought.

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Then he rouses himself and continues.

-The story is very simple. We did not correspond during this period and you don't know what happened to me. I will tell you briefly; I'm only going as far as Lukova...From the Gymnasium I entered the university to study medicine. I never finished...to some extent I hold friends and teachers responsible, but mostly I have only myself to blame...I had to leave, became a druggist, married, and with my dowry I established myself in a shop selling pills and castor oil in a small town. But I did have some luck: I had an honest father-in-law who gave me the dowry money right after the wedding, my wife was good and beautiful, the small town was tolerable.

...My wife's name was Maria. Even now I can see her standing before me...she turns to me helplessly from the mirror: the golden tresses will not surrender to her despotic comb. The curls scatter merrily in all directions...they refuse to remain suppressed under the garland which was then in style.

...Slender, and such kind, lively, laughing, sky-blue eyes.

...The practice didn't disturb us much....the small town was too poor, and a pharmacy without a doctor is not very useful. I earned little...it was really like Paradise...in the summer we would stand on the veranda holding hands, looking into each other's eyes, our lips touching!

...And what else should interest us? We had an income. Go places? Where to? From our veranda we could see almost the entire town...the low, crooked houses, with the tall, wide, black, wooden attics which were bent, as if in pity, over the arches of the inhabitants who lived upstairs in the poorer parts...as if they meant to keep the shrunken, old, emaciated faces from the sun.

...The small town was once prosperous. The attics used to be filled with produce and fruits; the marketplace with carts, with peasants, with merchants; among the white aprons and the gray smocks one could sometimes see a great landowner, too...at least that's what they told me. But the highway and the train made the town superfluous in the world of trade; the streets are empty now, the attics filled with decaying onions and moldy pieces of cheese, the only legacy remaining from the good old days.

...Poor! It's hard to imagine how poor! Ten grain dealers throw themselves on every measure of rye which a peasant brings. This raises the price. Then they come to an agreement

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on the price, or they buy in partnership...but when it comes to paying, all ten scrape their pockets...they have no money to buy the grain and end up borrowing at interest...And one hundred tailors for one pair of overalls, fifty shoemakers for one small repair...Such poverty! I've never seen anything like it!

...We isolated ourselves as much as possible from the life of the town...the fortunate are self-centered...

...But across from us, vis-à-vis our house, we noticed a young woman, probably no more than eighteen, twenty at the most. And neither of us could take our eyes off her...nor she from us...An unusual phenomenon...Imagine a beauty, a picture in a shabby frame, as only a Jewish window can be seen in a small town, under a dilapidated, crumbling roof...imagine a pair of sorrowful, dreamy, tear-filled eyes in an alabaster-white face, under a kerchief.

...God she made a poignant impression on us!

...For hours on end she would lean over the windowsill, her arms bent, looking mournfully at us, or at the stars above, swallowing her tears! We saw that she was always alone, forlorn—your men never have time—always despondent, homesick...she had unhappiness written all over her pale face...She probably came from far off, from a better, less confined home. She always gazed yearningly into the distance...her heart craved a freer life...she wanted to live, to love and be loved.

...Say what you will, there is an injustice among you. You sell your daughters...it is true that with time they become accustomed to their fate, with time they forget...they are pious, they are good, they are long-suffering...but who can count the bitter tears which fall on their woeful faces before their eyes dry up? Who can measure the suffering in their breasts before they become reconciled to a living death? Is this their reward for being good and pious women?

...You should see the woman's husband; hunchbacked, sallow...I saw him twice a day...when he left in the morning and when he returned at night...A crime...

* * *

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I confess that I had no answer for Polnievsky.

We both sat in silence for a while and then Polnievsky continued his story.

-Once the woman failed to appear. For one entire day she did not come to the window..."She must be ill," we thought. In the evening her husband, the sallow one, came to our shop and asked for medicine.

-What kind of medicine?

-How should I know—he says—medicine!

-For whom?

-That, too, you need to know? For my wife!

-What's wrong with her?

-I have no idea...she says that her heart aches...

-This—says Polnievsky—was our first meeting. I'll make a long story short...I'm something of a doctor, after all, so I went to see her...

Polnievsky started to speak indistinctly; he groped for cigarettes, then matches, and finally he opened his travelling bag and busied himself with the contents for several minutes.

In the meantime I had some disturbing thoughts.

I began to see Polnievsky in a different light; his story began to weigh on my spirits.

Can one ever know another person? Can one know what he is made of? The thought crossed my mind that sitting across from me may be a Christian skunk who sneaks into the chicken coop. He polemicizes a bit too much about the Jewish woman's lot, he searches too long for his matches; somehow, he is embarrassed in my presence. Why doesn't he want to give me more details? Why won't he tell me everything the way it was? Who knows what part he had in this business? Perhaps he played the old role of the snake in the Garden of Eden? Do you think that his conscience wouldn't let him? Especially with a young Jewish wife! Why not? Once, to gain glory, it was necessary to bring Jews to baptism; today it is enough to corrupt a Jewish woman by drawing her away from her God, from her parents, from her husband, from her whole life.

It is called liberalism to visit a prison, to bring a fresh breath of air and some sunshine, to awaken the prisoner, to give him a piece of cake, and then to disappear...not to see how the prisoner gnashes his teeth when the rusty key turns the lock once again;

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how anguished the face becomes, how spasmodically he breathes in the constricted air, how he tears his hair and rips his flesh, or how, if he can still cry, he waters his moldy, mouse-bitten crust of bread with bitter tears...To arouse an unhappy, insensible, repressed Jewish woman's heart to the peals of sweet, romantic music, to a new, wild, unknown or long-forgotten emotion, to kiss, and then adieu! close the door, and leave her to a life of gall and wormwood...

* * *

We are so glutted with poison, with bitterness and hatred, that when we are offered bread and salt we are sure that it is contaminated...even when the hand trembles with compassion, the eyes are filled with tears of pity, the lips speak words of comfort....

It is hard to believe! We are also polluted, the epidemic has also infected us.

* * *

Meanwhile Polnievsky found his matches and I took a cigarette from him, unwillingly. We smoked...the carriage became filled with blue smoke-rings...and I looked at them and thought: good and the evil cannot long endure together!

* * *

-We became friends—my Christian travelling companion continues—but nothing more than that...

-Why?—I ask, taken aback.

-From a distance we continued to think of each other as the best of friends, but she dared not visit us, nor we her. Just imagine what would have happened if she had come! The town is extremely religious and conservative. Aside from the barber-surgeon and a young lady's hairdresser, everyone wore the tradi-

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tional dark garb of the orthodox...I don't know myself what held us back...but that's not what I was getting at...

...During this time I was struck by the greatest misfortune that can befall a man. The pharmacy brought in very little...and my wife became ill. With each passing day I was more certain that she was dying, yet I didn't have the means to save her. She needed Italy, and I didn't have money for food...

...As you know, a starving patient is often full of hope, believing that the illness is past! I had to suppress my terrible pain and sorrow, and bury it deep inside my heart. While my heart bled I had to smile, no hint of worry dared wrinkle my brow...While I felt myself dying with her, I made plans with her for the coming year: to enlarge the house, to buy a piano...

His voice became hushed...

-I can't tell you everything, to relive my troubles...but my misfortune brought me together with her misfortune, and we were drawn closer to one another....

Lukova appeared in the distance.

-In the few moments that remain I must tell you that in all my life I have never seen such an unhappy woman, yet with so much feeling and sympathy for others...and so unaffected, so natural, nothing excessive...She didn't move from Maria's bed. She prevailed upon her husband to arrange a loan at low interest for me. She watched over us; she was our housekeeper, our cook, our most devoted friend. And when Maria died she was, perhaps, even more inconsolable than I...It was then that I realized that the hatred between nations is unnatural...As soon as things are bad and the hot-headed or the downtrodden want to protest, then the hypocritical writer or the politician denounces the Jews...My experience has taught me that Jews are not our enemies, that we can live together in peace!

We are drawing closer and closer to Lukova, and I, still apprehensive about the end, interrupt him and ask:

-And what happened to the woman?

-I don't know. I buried my wife, sold the pharmacy, wept when I parted from my dear neighbor and... nothing! Now I live in Lukova and things are no better for me...

-And tell me, what is the name of the small town in which you used to live?

-Konskivala.

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-And your neighbor...is she tall and pale?

-Yes!

-And slender?

-Yes. Do you know her?—he asks, surprised.

-Does she have a beauty mark on the left side of her nose?

-What kind of beauty mark?—Janec laughs—What are you thinking of?

I begin to think that I was mistaken and asked:

-Perhaps it's on the right side of her nose.

-What kind of beauty mark? What are you talking about?

-Perhaps you didn't notice...but her husband, does he have a sallow complexion?

-Yes.

-Is his name Chaim?

-I think not, but it could be; the devil only knows...

-But her name is Chana!

-No, of course not! Sarah! I remember Sarah, for sure...I used to call her Saruchana...I could never forget her name.

What a fool I was! Would a Jewish wife behave this way?

Translated from the Yiddish by Golda Werman

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Han-ping Chin

THE FOUNTAIN PEN

The spring of 1946 came to our devastated town. The birds returned and sang as in the past, not noticing what had happened. The tender green leaves sprouted from the old willows along the stream. Since the Japanese troops had retreated and surrendered one year ago, everything seemed to have recovered its original shape. Even the corpses of cats were put up on high twigs because people still believed that to bury a dead cat would violate the moral of a legend:

> Once upon a time, a tiger chased a cat up a tree, at the top of which the cat felt relieved and cursed all tigers to die disgracefully leaning against a rock. Envious of cats' climbing skills, the tiger retorted that all cats would die hung up in a tree. Such internal strife in a big family disturbed God. The mutual blasphemy was not propitious at all and this nasty scene became a warning to all species.

The war had ended; no more gunfire, no more door-knocking at midnight. The triumphal parade, the beating drum and blowing trumpet of the county orphan band and the sound of fireworks helped people to forget their loss of livelihood and that their family members had been lost, raped, or humiliated. As the excitement faded, people talked more and more about food, clothes, and local herbs to treat the ones lying at home.

Some shops were open, selling oil, salt, sliced melon, hand-rolled cigarettes, bamboo baskets, etc. But there were not many buyers. Instead, bystanders gossiped and exchanged false information. "Hitler was hiding" and "A U.S. tank was trapped by a boa in Burma." Occasionally, the younger of the two tailors in town passed by. He was the only one who had a pair of leather

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boots, and he liked to walk on the granite slabs paved in two parallel strips. The nails under the soles hit the stone and the clatter was clear and resonant. Bystanders would stop their talking, turn their heads and greet him with admiring eyes.

It was from that crowd that I originally heard the encouraging explanation of *The Testament of Premier Sun Yat-sen,* which we had to recite at all official and school ceremonies after his death in 1926. The first sentence of his will read, "I have devoted myself to our national revolution for forty years." Among the bystanders, the common understanding of these words was: "In the fortieth year of the Republic [1911 was the first year], the real Celestial Son will appear, bringing with him the mandate of Heaven." They were waiting for the time when peace and happiness would come.

The town was located a short walk from a coal mine which had closed a few years before. The coal shafts were deserted; the vents were stuffed with mud and junk. The miners' dormitories were rented by the residents, my family among them, but nobody bothered to maintain them. The wooden floors were shaky and broken. When my younger brother and I had nothing to do, we would take out the movable pieces and watch how the mice stored food and tiny items they stole from us. The latrine was next to the kitchen. The stagnant water in the front gutter, where wrigglers were swimming, was muddy and stinking.

Under the eaves, in front of the window, was a battlefield where spiders wove their webs, trapping flies and dragonflies, while centipedes raced along the wall. Somewhere about this time I witnessed a splendid spectacle I had never seen before—a snake swallowed a frog whole and then lay immobile. Every summer evening, the humming of swarms of mosquitoes dominated the room. Our mothers kept waving their cattail-leaf fans to protect us drowsy kids, who jerked and scratched to repel the sneak attacks.

The Japanese invaders had left us susceptible to all kinds of diseases, so we suffered a real depletion of playmates and family. My two younger brothers died of smallpox within two weeks of each other, and the two sisters who lived across the vegetable garden from us died of tuberculosis. The nine-year-old girl next door suffered from dropsy and died. I had gone to see her as she lay in a bamboo chair and felt guilty for once refusing her per-

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mission to join our game of tag because she was a girl. Extremely incomprehensible to me was the death of the medical doctor and his wife from unknown diseases—they lived next door and were nice people, Catholics, and I used to believe they would live longer than ordinary people. I was one of the fittest: I suffered from periodic malaria and sporadic diarrhea for three years, became weak, but somehow survived.

The spring of 1946 was my last semester of elementary school. My father had lost his job because the tool factory he worked in was destroyed in the war. He decided to take a chance when he heard that his former boss was recovering his business in a big city a thousand miles away. He tried to borrow money for travelling expenses, but, as I heard him tell my mother, he was refused many times. In spite of our precarious financial position, he retained a very strong desire to send me to middle school.

There were three middle schools in our county, two of which were private and expensive. The public school did not charge tuition and had a good reputation, but the entrance examination was very difficult—only one hundred students were admitted out of twelve hundred applicants. To make things even worse, one quarter of the places were reserved for the powerful local families. Since the public school was my only hope, I worked day and night, even on holidays. I recited idioms, collected model essays, and walked ten miles of muddy road to ask my mathematics teacher for tutoring. My father used to say, "Heaven will never let a sincere person down." I passed the entrance exam and was admitted to the school.

My father was very excited and stared at the admission notice for a long time. It seemed to him that this was a milestone for the next generation. His education had consisted of two children's books traditionally taught in temples. In his eleventh year my grandparents died, and he became an orphan and child worker, feeding sesame into a manual oil press and serving the proprietor's family. Then, while working in a grocery store, he learned how to use an abacus and write simple letters just by watching.

That night I listened to a discussion between my parents, the main topic being what they should buy me to celebrate. My mother suggested a pair of trousers the color of indenthrene (a

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German dye of sky blue fashionable in China in the forties). My father said that I should have a fountain pen to write foreign words and that, after all, my calligraphy with a brush was far from satisfactory to him. Then they sighed, knowing that they couldn't afford to buy either the trousers or the pen. My father had been unemployed for two years; the pendulum clock, our only mechanical possession, and even my parents' warm clothes had been sold. Every evening we three brothers were like locusts, devouring our meager meal in a few minutes. After we finished, our parents shared a sweet potato as their only dinner. Even though my father was regarded by his former employees as exceptionally diligent and reliable, his lack of education offered him little hope of finding a job.

A fountain pen was a luxury item in our town. Before I finished elementary school I had never dreamed of owning one, because I knew my family could not afford it and I was not knowledgeable enough to merit one. But I longed for the status symbolized by a fountain pen. I used to watch the middle school boys who sported fountain pens with shining clips outside their left chest pockets, as they strolled proudly with their hands in the side pockets of their pants. And, more stylishly, some high-school girls hung two fountain pens on the left edge of their *cheongsam* (a high-necked, close-fitting dress with the skirt slit up the sides to the knees). There were very few females in high school. They were refined and solemn, mostly from rich families. Because my three older sisters all died before I was born, I thought girls were totally different creatures from boys, totally inaccessible. So, naturally, I believed those girls deserved two fountain pens. As for myself, I was content with reality and learned from a big boy in our neighborhood how to cut a goose quill into a nib. It was an adequate substitute, but its exalted meaning became apparent only after many years when I saw a Russian movie in which the Tsar's navy commander wrote with a goose quill.

Eventually, because of his reputation for honesty, my father was able to borrow travelling money from two creditors at high interest. The day before my father left for the big city on the Yangtze River, my mother decided to sacrifice some old clothes. She tore out the seams, cut the relatively intact pieces out from the rag, and sewed them together by hand to make a sack. She then

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boiled the sack in a caldron with black dye to make the color uniform. My father used that sack to carry all his clothes and belongings, while he hid his money in the pocket of his underwear. The next morning, my mother burned the joss sticks. As a wisp of incense arose, she then placed them on the altar desk, imploring Buddha and the spirit of our ancestors to bless my father with good fortune.

Carrying the sack, I walked two miles with my father to see him off. The sack was heavy and I felt it also held the uncertainty and hope of my family. I wanted to lug the sack further, but my father persuaded me to return home. I stopped and watched him as he wandered down the tortuous road and disappeared behind a hill. A long journey lay ahead of him —one day's walking, three days on a raft, and forty hours of rough railway. Mother murmured to herself: "Buddha bless a smooth sailing...it's better to get the train ticket soon, the lodging is expensive, the money is not enough to stay too long on the way."

* * *

In my father's letters, the illusory hopes and disappointing news came in turns. In the replies Mother would dictate to me, the first line always followed the formula handed down for generations: "Father your Excellency, I report the following under your knees." Besides offering a few comforting words, we reported our problems. This letter was written after my youngest brother was saved from a severe attack of diarrhea:

> *Father your Excellency, I report the following from under your knees:*
>
> Your letter was received and read with allegiance. The principles about study and behavior you have taught me are very important. I pledge to follow your advice and never to disappoint you.
>
> Unfortunately, my younger brother has suffered from terrible diarrhea. Moxibustion treatment and all available herbs have been unsuccessful. The last suggestion by our neighbors was to hire a Taoist priest to come to his rescue,

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since my brother is assumed to be in a process of reincarnation—his soul has been taken away from him and attached to a fetus, somewhere, whose birth would bring his death. Taoist Shao performed the ceremony to drive away the ghost who possessed my brother. The nails and hair trimmed from him were sealed in a jar, with incantations drawn on yellow paper and copper coins inscribed with the name of Emperor Kang Xi of the Qing Dynasty. In addition to this protection for my brother's soul, Taoist Shao drove five nails into the floor in front of Mother's bed. Those five nails were supposed to kill the fetus and set the possessed soul free to return to my brother.

Now Mother is not so scared as before, and my brother looks better. However, the five silver dollars you left have been spent on food and rent. Mother had to borrow money to pay the Taoist Shao, who complained that such an amount is not enough for his services. We are now deeper in debt.

Please take good care of yourself. There are more risks on a journey than at home. Mother is always murmuring that riding and sailing give a traveler only a thirty percent chance of surviving. We pray to Buddha for you.

Kowtowing,
Your son

Soon a friend of my father's came to see us. He was a warm but impetuous man. A congenital limp made him rock with every step; he walked very slowly. Being eager to inform us that he was coming, he yelled when he was ten yards from our door: "Is elder sister (a polite form of address for a friend's wife) at home?" Mother and I greeted him from inside. He strode across the threshold while his right hand pulled something from his jacket pocket. Before he sat down, he gave me a tiny package, caressing my head with his left hand. He said: "I just came back from the place where your father now stays. This is the present he asked me to bring to you." I hastily opened the wrapper. To my astonishment, it was a fountain pen.

I felt uneasy, since I knew that Father had bought the pen with some of the borrowed money and that he must have drastically reduced his expenses to save such an amount. But the pen was very attractive. The shining barrel of amber celluloid was stylish, and inside the cover there was a piston-like button for

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pumping ink. I pumped in the ink, took a piece of paper, and wrote down some popular Chinese classical poetry in columns and the few English words I had just learned in rows. I fondled and looked at the pen, disassembled and assembled it, put it in my left chest pocket and took it out, then looked, wrote and admired it again. That night I put the pen beside my pillow and touched it several times to reassure myself that it was indeed the very pen I had wished for.

My mother did not instruct me in how to care for the pen. But I knew it would be bad judgment to proudly display it. My anxieties were justified, for just a few days after my father left home, one of our creditors came to the door and claimed to be broke. I flushed with embarrassment for my mother. The rent collector, who lived at the end of our row and had been a small-time detective for the mining bureau, was also a source of annoyance to us. He had lost his left arm when he jumped from a running train during one of his smuggling operations. The women in the neighborhood called him "One Arm" behind his back and "Chief Detective" to his face. Although he was no longer a frightening hero with a pistol and dagger, he was still a powerful man in our town because of his connection with the authorities and the gangs. He always wore a short gown of decorated Guangdong gauze and was always hanging about, humming a salacious tune of which I could distinguish only the first words: "Holding a whore in January, it's a nice New Year..."

I once heard him tell a housewife, "My boss has decided to take back all the houses soon. I tried very hard to postpone the deadline in your favor, but you had better look for a new place." As a result, the threatened families gave him greens, cloth, and money wrapped in red paper and said: "Chief Detective, thank you for your charity." Then, those families would be rewarded with peace until next time, when it appeared that a family had received money or bought a valuable object. Under the circumstances, a new fountain pen might draw the attention of creditors or induce the one-armed detective to make trouble. I recognized that I had better not hang the pen in my chest pocket as other students did.

The third evening after I received the pen was a lovely autumn night. The moonlight was as mild as water flooding over the field, the feather-like clouds floated, and the fireflies were

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dancing. In the shadows of tall trees, the ragged houses and the garbage piles were invisible. While mothers chatted in the doorways, we children chased each other and played hide-and-seek. I put the pen in the inclined right pocket of my pants. The pocket was shallow, and I knew it would be easy to lose the pen when running and jumping. I checked many times at first to make sure the pen was still there. As we passed an open field near a wasted railway station, the natural demeanor of a twelve- year-old boy returned to me and I forgot everything.

Jumping and shouting, I was the best at simulating a horse's neigh, and of course I forgot about the pen. When mothers began calling their sons, we scattered and went home after having thoroughly enjoyed ourselves. I felt relaxed, until a sudden sick feeling came over me and I remembered the pen. I was reluctant to think about what had happened, even as I groped in my pocket. To my great horror, it was gone. Hopeless, I went back to the farthest point we had reached. Casting my eyes on the ruts of wheelbarrows, I scanned every bit and scrap in the moonlight. Finally, I returned to the place where I had last checked to make sure the pen was in my pocket.

The pen was indeed lost! I sneaked dejectedly into our room, where Mother was snoring after a long day's work. I lay down on my bed, my mind like a screen, reviewing our games and wanderings. I tried in vain to figure out where I might have lost the pen until my drowsy eyes forced me to sleep. An image of my father came into my hazy dream: he was in his usual gray gown, carrying his sack, walking on a rugged road or sitting on a long wooden bench in a car of the train with the wind piercing through the fissures and ventilation holes in the walls. He had wandered along the sidewalk, plucked up his courage to enter a company building, and then, crestfallen, had walked out after his job application was turned down. I awoke in a cold sweat. I imagined him hesitating at the department store counter and deciding to buy the expensive pen with money scrimped from his food and lodging allowance. This marked the first appearance of my insomnia.

The yellowish paper pane of the window blurred the setting moonlight. I saw the bronze waterpipe standing on the desk. When Father was at home, he would ask me to polish it with a piece of cloth and the powder ground from two slates. Sometimes

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I was bored by such tedious work but the waterpipe seemed comforting that night. I remembered how Father loaded tobacco and lit it with a rolled paper that had been ignited in the oven. His guests and he would smoke in turns; then he would tell some stories and recent news. At those times he looked amiable, and I felt that his closely cropped hair and his manner of talking should be the standard for a father. I would be happy to polish the waterpipe again if he would come home.

I decided to get up earlier than anyone else to search again, but the sun was very high when my mother called me to breakfast. I detoured on the way to school, but there were so many wheelbarrows full of coal, it was difficult to find any small object, and the carriers were yelling at me to get out of the way. I was late for class. When I entered the room my classmates turned their heads with curious eyes, but the teacher didn't scold me. In silence, she allowed me to walk to my desk and sit down.

Soon I couldn't hear the teacher's words—I wished for the fountain pen to magically reappear, but I realized that it was lost forever. I blamed myself. In the dark field, nobody would have noticed the pen if I had hung it on the edge of my left chest pocket. Why had I taken the pen out that evening? I should have left it at home. From then on I felt guilty whenever I dipped an iron pen point into ink and wrote.

My mother was always busy with housework. When she fetched water from a well, the bucket was too heavy for her bound feet, so she had to use one arm to prop her body against the wall. She often worked extra hours riding the pedal-driven gin to make a little money, which always put her in a frantic mood when she arrived home. She was so exhausted by the time she fell asleep that she didn't wake up even when the hungry mice bit the thick calluses on the soles of her feet. She had no time left to pay attention to me after serving dinner and washing and mending our clothes.

After a few days, she became faintly aware that something was wrong with me—I had been extremely quiet and was obviously pondering something. She put her hand on my forehead to check if I had a fever and asked : "You don't feel well, do you?" I answered: "It's nothing!" Eventually, I told her in a low voice: "I lost the fountain pen!" She paused for a while, as various expres-

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sions passed over her face. I gazed at Mother and prepared for her answer.

I noticed for the first time that half of her hair had turned gray, as dry and puffy as hay. She was under fifty, but her flaccid eyelids drooped and shut out a part of her large eyes. The dimple at the left corner of her mouth, instead of being a delicate feature as it would have on a rich woman, seemed to indicate a craving for something. I remembered that she had worried ever since a fortune-teller had said she would have a short life. I prayed that it wouldn't be true. When my mind returned to the lost pen, I felt that her eyes were beaming at a far place and her vision receding to a remote past. Finally she said: "Don't be so sad, be careful from now on."

* * *

One afternoon, arriving home from school, I saw all our cotton-padded clothes hanging on a bamboo pole outside the door. Mother did that every year to get rid of the mustiness after the long rainy season. At first glance, I recognized Father's big clothes among the others. Joyfully I ran to see him. In the next moment, the lost pen jumped into my mind and guilt stopped me at the door. Father called my name. He was sitting on a bamboo bench and smiling.

His face had become very dark and thin like a dried date, and his forehead and neck were covered with rashes from the heat. His travelling gear was scattered around him—the same items he had bought ten months before looked worn out. The toes of both shoes were ripped. The only souvenir from his trip was a calendar printed in the city where he had stayed. My classmates had shown me the fancy goods brought by their fathers from the big cities, such as a flashlight with a shiny barrel, springy athletic shoes, a transparent plastic belt, a clothes umbrella, and more. The sharp contrast made me realize that Father had not found a job.

At school, the imperious third graders (the equivalent to ninth graders in the U.S.) claimed to be "lords" and called the freshmen "rice balls" (meaning dumb and uncivilized). As a

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transition, the second year students were called and actually treated as "students." I was pale and weak, but my clothes evoked even more scorn from the "lords." My all-season black jacket was oversized because Mother had chosen it to fit me for at least three more years. It made me look even smaller than I really was and appear defenseless. On rainy days, I rolled up my trouser legs and walked barefoot. My cone-shaped bamboo hat became a target at which the "lords" would throw small pebbles to show off their aim. When the weather was nice, they wore singlets with "ATOM" printed on the back (a fashion initiated by atomic bomb fever) and rode bicycles in a slalom pattern. Although I jumped aside, their bicycles would brush me and they would laugh raucously. About to ascend to the status of a "student," I dreamed that Father found a job, and that I would be better equipped and treated with the respect of the other students.

I was preoccupied as Father talked to me. The first things he asked about were my test scores and my teachers' evaluations. I showed him all my homework sets and exam sheets from the first year. He was engrossed in the words of commendation written in red ink at the top right corner of the front pages, as if they were a reward for his strenuous efforts or a soothing medicine for his bitter life. The general review of first year mathematics contained one hundred problems that were not required work. The teacher had highly praised the few students who'd done them. I was one of them. Father smiled at the compliment. His eyes narrowed into two seams and wrinkles radiated from the corners of his eyes like a fan spreading to his temples.

He went to bed very early that evening. I did my homework in the dim light of two wicks floating in vegetable oil, temporarily relieved that he hadn't noticed what kind of pen I was using.

The next morning, I was awakened by choking smoke—Mother was adding coal to the firewood in the oven. I whispered in her ear: "Could you talk to Father about the pen? Please intercede for me with him."

Father spent the day in town, seeing what had changed since he went away and if there was any chance for him to make a living. It was easy for me to dodge his attention for another day. When Mother and I used our neighbor's stone mill to grind rice (she used the flour as starch to glue several layers of rag together to serve as the uppers of shoes), I asked her if Father

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was angry with me about the fountain pen. We both used one hand to rotate the mill and let the other hand rest. It was a rare opportunity for Mother to talk to me. She said:

"Father is upset by the loss of your fountain pen. You should know that the money to buy the pen was not easily spared. In fact, it was dug out from his mouth [saved from his food]. He thought you would be vigilant about your valuables. During his apprenticeship, any small error would bring a curse or even a beating. His cautious and serious manner was tempered from the sticks of his master and foreman."

She fed some rice into the funnel of the mill, and continued:

"Since Father is satisfied with your school work and our neighbors value your behavior, he was less hurt. I told him that a fountain pen is trivial compared with our big losses. You see, we abandoned our home when Japanese troops approached the Yangtze River. At that time, you were too little to worry. The Japanese did not let up, even after we fled far from home. This time you were old enough to see how we lost our pots and pans."

"All these years, your father has toiled to raise you children. You have seen our old cat moving the kittens, one after the other, holding them by the scruffs with her teeth. That is what Father has had to do. When I had your sisters, Father couldn't come home for years, so I had to thresh grains during my pregnancy and even wash diapers in the pond the day after the baby was delivered. Then my entire body became arthritic. You want to know why five children died and only three have survived? Perhaps I committed sins in another life—but the retribution comes in this one."

Her eyes were wet, yet she held back the tears. When she was able to control her voice, she continued:

"Everybody has a predestined amount of tribulation. I told Father that a property loss might be balanced, by divine decree, with some reduction of deserved physical suffering. He did not believe in the Buddha when he was young, but fate has made him reconsider."

I propped up the upper part of the stone mill with a broom handle, and Mother brushed the grooves to get the last bit of flour and clean the mill. Before we walked home, she put the basin with the flour under her left arm and said:

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"You are a sensible child, and Father likes you. He is tough on children, but you should understand why. Every father hopes his son can become a dragon (great man). Grandpa, my father, always said to my younger brother, your uncle, that a ten-year-old boy should be as ambitious as his father. You are going to be thirteen. You should distance yourself from the wild boys and behave like a grown-up. Share the hardship with Father and be an excellent student. Then you can stand on your own two feet and be someone in the future."

She walked home in front of me, carrying the basin. Her bound feet moved like the tips of a drawing compass that had disabled her since she was an infant. How many times had she fallen down, scattering vegetables or washed clothes from her basket? How many times had her feet caught in the crevices and holes of the wooden floor? She never complained, but how could I let her serve me forever?

I was inspired by Mother's words and determined to work like a man. The new semester started, and the review during the summer had kept me in good shape. After school, I picked purslane from the grasses on a stream bank and gave it to Mother to cook for supper. I also moved the rubble away from a vacant lot near a well, and tilled it into a vegetable patch. I watered and spread manure. Eventually the radishes and cabbages grew big, and I felt proud to harvest them and bring them to her.

* * *

The civil war was raging in the north, where the major coal mines were located. The cities in the south depended on the coal supply from the area where we lived. By the end of 1947, the railway branch, which had been dismantled a few years before, had been rebuilt. It skirted the west side of the county, about five kilometers from our home. Meanwhile, the abandoned coal mines were put back into operation. The businessmen set up fenced freight yards along the loading line of the railroad station, where the coal was heaped in small hills. A government agency, which owned the largest mine, had six new Dodge trucks shuttling between the coal mine and the railway station. It

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created a spectacle for the local people who had never seen a motor vehicle. But the six trucks couldn't transport much coal alone. Wheelbarrows were mobilized as the main method of transport. The old longshoremen and the young coolies swarmed to the new livelihood. Having no other opportunities for work, my father joined their ranks.

The wheelbarrow was matched with a big bamboo basket which could contain 400 to 600 pounds of coal. The single wheel was a wooden disk trimmed with an iron stripe, lacking a tire to absorb the shock. The shaft of the wheel was a round wooden bar rolling in the holes of the supporting pieces. Since there was no ball bearing, the friction was intense—in the early morning, the creaking could be heard a half mile away. The carriers used a belt to transfer the weight from the handlebeams to their shoulders. They leaned their bodies forward and trudged along.

The five-kilometer hillside road had been paved with silty sand and pebbles many years before. The soil was washed away and ruts zigzagged through the uneven gaps among the pebbles. The wheels bounced and bounced. The workers' shoulders and their hands grasping the handles, all their nerves and bones were violently shaken. Sometimes the wheel jammed in a ragged trough, at other times it sank in the mud. Up the slopes, every inch required great effort and sweat; the toilers often stopped to look for ways to avoid a single pebble. Down the slopes, the wheel would jump from one pit to another, and the heavy load was like an unleashed bull dashing off, so that the workers had to use their body weight and arm strength as a drag.

Father had worked in accounting for many years and did not have the endurance or the muscles of a longshoreman. The first day, he harnessed himself and went to the coal mine very early. Mother had persuaded him to fill the basket only half way. He staggered along, but tried to walk firmly, pushing the wheelbarrow while holding it steady. He pulled over to the roadside many times, and sat on one of the handlebeams to rest. His feet blistered in their straw sandals, his legs felt weak and his calves were cramped. He needed to regain his strength—after going only one third of the distance, the coal in the basket looked like a mountain to him.

From the last hilltop, the carriers could see the houses of the county center and hear the locomotive's whistle. At the foot of the

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hill, the road flattened for the last two kilometers through town to the coal yards. But the last downslope was a great trial to every man. As the wheelbarrow went faster and faster, Father followed with his feet crisscrossing like a drunkard's. He stumbled, and the wheelbarrow went out of track and overturned. The belt tangled around his neck and shoulders, and his face and elbows scraped the ground. The basket fell from the wheelbarrow and most of the coal tumbled into the roadside ditch. Several softhearted carriers held him upright, massaged his bruised right ankle, and helped him to mount the basket and scoop the coal up from the ditch. Some of the coal was carried away by the trickling water. Each of the carriers gave him several handfuls of coal, not enough for them to miss, but enough for him to make up his loss. Then they helped him until he was past the scale, unloaded and got his pay.

At sunset, he came home limping and dragging the empty wheelbarrow behind him. His scraped face was covered with dust and sweat. Mother hurried to fetch warm water for him to wash with. She served chopped skin of winter melon fried with hot pepper for dinner. She didn't eat, but instead huddled herself up and stared at the table. I was very sorry that I had not gone with Father that day.

* * *

The next time Father set out with his wheelbarrow, I tied a rope to the front bar and insisted on going with him. It was dawn. Up slopes, I pulled the rope with all my weight. Down slopes, I pulled backwards as a braking force. In the beginning, it was hard to coordinate our efforts. I would stop when he needed help, and I would pull when he stopped to catch his breath or to set himself for a turn. Soon, I became skillful at synchronizing my pulling with his pushing.

I knew from the position of the sun when it was seven o'clock, so at the last moment I hurried home to swallow my rice porridge and run to school. I was exhausted. Gradually the teacher's voice became indistinct and hypnotic. The fifty minute class seemed to stretch on longer than usual. I bit my lip to keep

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myself from falling asleep. The janitor used a hand bell to mark the time, and the jingling sound was very comforting. I would put my head on my desk until my classmates woke me for the next class. It was satisfying to be able to help my father in some way, and to do something to redeem the loss of the fountain pen.

But my hauling job did not last long. Since inflation had rendered paper money worthless, a group of middle school teachers opened up a coal pit as a sideline. They hired Father to weigh the wheelbarrows and write invoices to the carriers—our situation turned for the better. The creditors did not come as often as before, and I didn't have to get up so early. However, I did not know how long Father could keep his job or how long my schooling could continue. I was the only one among two years of elementary school graduates to get into public middle school. A few students from rich families went to private school, but the majority of students became child workers, peddlers or peasants. I felt lucky that my father had not yet yielded to circumstances, but had persevered so I could continue my studies.

I was awakened to my new fortunate status when I saw a former classmate, a small fellow named Wong, selling water chestnuts outside the front door of our middle school. I had already become estranged from my former classmates. I liked to play with other children, but I felt guilty when I spent too much time having fun. I remembered Mother's words and gave up some of my amusements.

One Sunday afternoon, I was studying by the window while Father chatted with our neighbors on the porch shared by the two families. They sat on tiny stools, the men with their tea cups and water pipes, the women with their needlework. The topic of their gossip was local news, and for quite a while they commented on the children in our community. One woman used me as a shining example of boyhood to lay shame to her own son, and another woman used me to discredit a boy whose mother she hated.

When I tried to concentrate on my book, the clanging sound of a gong came closer, then the rushing footsteps of children. A crowd passed our door. From the rhythm of the gong, I knew there would be a monkey show. The direction of the gradually vanishing noises told me where the crowd was going. My mind followed them. I thought the best place would probably be

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open area outside the brick fence of a rich family, where the big willows would shade the viewers. The monkeys were born in the mountains of Sichuan province, but their masters and trainers were Henan peasants fleeing from the flooding Yellow River. They were very resourceful, training the monkeys to beg for money.

The show was great fun for the children. Last time, I had seen a monkey dressed in a red costume and a hero's hat from the Beijing opera, throwing somersaults forward and backward under the direction of the master. Every now and then it would snatch the gong from the master, pretend to refuse to perform, and then turn the gong up as a plate to collect donations from the circle of viewers.

The climax of the show had been sheepback riding, which the trainer usually deferred until the end of the program when the flow of donations slowed and the children grew tired of waiting. I could imagine it: as soon as the monkey held the reins and put one foot in the stirrup, the sheep would dash forward, not waiting for the monkey to sit in the saddle. This would put the monkey in a sorry position, and the children in the audience would laugh heartily. The monkey was nimble, however, and it laid its chest against the saddle like a circus stuntman. Finally, the monkey brandished a whip, and once in a while pulled on his hat to keep it from falling.

I wondered why the sheep didn't wait for the proper time to gallop. Perhaps a sheep couldn't be trained as easily as a horse, or perhaps the sheep wanted to defy the monkey as its second master. Then I heard Father say to the women who praised me: "Yes, I am determined to support his study. If need be, I will willingly crawl on the ground for that." His voice sounded like the crack of a whip on a slack horse's back. It startled me from my daydream. I dipped the iron pen point in ink, hunched over my literature workbook, and continued to write out the ancient songs.

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POEMS

Richard Howard

POEM BEGINNING WITH A LINE BY ISADORA DUNCAN

The third time I resisted D'Annunzio
was years after the War,
and to dilapidations in My Life
every limb testifies
since the escapes (elementary enough)
of those Houdini days!
I find it pitiful to contemplate
our mutual conceit
on those absurd occasions, now we know
all that has intervened.
Yet what *do* we know, really? I say "all"
as if I had been schooled
in catastrophe, when Triumph was my mode.
His too, apparently...

Raising his eyelids as though he were
removing his trousers,
the poet stood in my Paris *loge d'artiste,*
towering under me,
the *chaise-longue* crammed with his chrysanthemums
—"lion blooms," he called them,
"*Ecco i leoni*"—and licked his lips as if
they were someone else's.
That was my first evasion: "They smell—" I said,
"they smell like drowned sailors."
Whereupon virtue was intact: Italians are
grimly conventional—
so much easier to shock than to persuade.
The next time, my escape

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was dicier, for in his own domain...
I was dancing in Rome,
and what occurred, or failed to, at the hotel
was not, as I recall,
the outcome of odious comparisons merely,
but of actions: the sheets
were thrown back, and Gabriele showed
a sincere if brackish
enthusiasm for my thighs—"columns more
melodious by night
than Memnon's temple at dawn"—and just then
Deucie, my doberman,

leaped on the bed, wild in my defence
or was it my defeat?—
another jealous bitch like the Marchesa Casati!
But could a dog deter
that lover at that point? It was my own
screams of "Deucie, down!"
which shrivelled my assailant to his doom
as only memory can:
Deucie—Duse: mine as much as his
the disgrace awakened
in a sacred name consigned to comedy,
the fiasco of farce—
laughter has no erectile tendencies:
Deucie and I were saved.

In Nice, too, that *third* time (counting was
a crucial part of it)
even desire, for him, was out of the question
without the distractions
of vanity. And love impossible. He would be
entitled only to
lies and funny business, and so I fell
or would have fallen yet

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again, if it had not been for the odd crystals,
powders, grains, the uncut
gems and a thousand gorgeous trifles poured
for the sake of "aura,"
some burnt, some merely glowing like embers
around us where we lounged

in that silly mummy-case of an apartment—
another hour there and I
should have died in the odor of Orient
as some are said to die
in the odor of sanctity. Did *I* say as much?
I must have—the remark
made his eyebrows play like summer lightning
up around his hairline
(bald as an egg, but he has a hairline still).
Checkmate! I've learned it means
Shah mat: the king is dead. Such artifice
was bound to spring a leak—
out cold, bequeathing me a carcass quite
uninhabitable...

My resistances, as I have called them, were
no more than submissions
to Animal, Vegetable, Mineral Realms—
flower, dog, druggery.
I wonder how to escape, were he to press
new designs that must be
obscene to be believed? Trust inertia
over the intellect
I cannot muster... At least it makes a tale,
a sort of haphazard
Scheherazade. And if we were never amazed,
there would be no stories
to tell about us. Believe in the mystery
of Woman: it gives her one.

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Samuel Menashe

AWAKENING

Like one born again
To the same mother
I wake each morning
The same, another
Who takes my name
But cannot place me
In dreams, nightmares
Where I became
The one she bears

TRANSPLANT

I would give
My liver, kidneys
Heart itself
For you to live
In perfect health
With me, your clone
Whose grafted cells
Grow marrow, bone

If all else fails
Do not reject
My skin or nails
Whatever's left
Of me for you
By a hair's breadth
Will see us through

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FOREVER AND A DAY

No more than that
Dead cat shall I
Escape the corpse
I kept in shape
For the day off
Immortals take

Michael Collier

THE CAVE

I think of Plato and the limited technology
of his cave, the primitive projection
incapable of fast forward or reverse,
stop-action or slo-mo and the instant replay
that would have allowed him to verify,
once and for all, *Justice* or the *Good*,

such as the way my family did, hour upon hour,
in the dark, watching films of my sister
diving, going over her failures and successes
like a school of philosophers, arguing
fiercely, pulling her up from the depths
of the blue water, feet first, her splash

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blooming around her hips then dying out
into a calm flat sheet as her fingertips appeared.
Sometimes we kept her suspended in her mimesis
of gainer and twist until the projector's lamp
burned blue with smoke and the smell of acetate
filled the room. Always from the shabby armchairs

of our dialectic we corrected the imperfect
attitude of her toes, the tuck of her chin,
took her back to the awkward approach or weak
hurdle and everywhere restored the half-promise
of her form, so that each abstract gesture
performed in an instant of falling revealed

that fond liaison of time and movement,
the moment held in the air, the illusion
of something whole, something true.
And though what we saw on the screen would never
change, never submit to our arguments, we believed
we might see it more clearly and understand

that what we judged was a result of poor light
or the apparent size of things or the change
an element evokes such as when we allowed her
to reenter the water and all at once her body
skewed with refraction, an effect we could not save
her from, though we hauled her up again and again.

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Peter Sacks

HYMN FOR THE NEW YEAR

The end of our own century,
headless angels flailing the yard,
the final spasm of their wings
caught in the slow red crystal of eternity.

Neither tears nor blood alone,
the echo of their last song
Not for our sakes but your own
still moistening the shade in which we shelter

reaching this time for the fat black hen,
its feathers fouled with panic,
answering, *This too was given,*
for our earthly hunger.

Like the cleansing water and the fire,
the tree of which we made
this level stump,
and iron for the blade.

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Rachel Hadas

SEA, SKY, MOUNTAIN, LANTERN

Oilslicked, opal, sapphire,
saturnine, the Aegean
deploys dark bands of seaweed
whose tideless ripples lap
fitfully in a sly
slow agon with a sky
whose brazen heat
gonging down at noon
blues to a weak solution
over rainrinsed twilight
and fades to greyish gauze
behind this yellow moon,
new and demure,
glimmering at the mountain
that beetles over land
and water; halfway up,
a convent squats in pines,
one of whose seven nuns,
perhaps to greet a pilgrim,
perhaps to mark a saint's day
tonight has lit a lantern
in the chapel window
shining for miles and miles.

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Stephen Ackerman

NETS

for J.A., L.H.

The day on the beach we borrowed
On the beach, we watched
A smallcraft fill and rise
And fall
In a sudden braided rainstorm.
Later, after the Lord
Heard your prayer,
That sweet, generous, wholehearted
"Help me," then night came.
And the rain simplified the beach,
Purified the beach of its bathers,
Blankets, its handwritten tennis courts
And invisible nets;
Emptied it, like an entrance
Through which they have all departed.

You could not postpone entering
That hope, too clouded, handwritten,
Too human, the marginal way
Of the tide.
How completely you disappeared!

An undertone we listen for, not to.

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David Lehman

THE DESIRE FOR STRANGE CITIES

1.

Each street means something other than it says.
On Haste Street in Berkeley, the temptation to amble
Down the hill, lazy as a guitar imitating the rain,
Is irresistible, and on Blake Street, a few blocks away,
The cross streets have names like "Jerusalem" and "Thel,"
Or they should. Meanwhile, on 74th Street in Manhattan,
Between Amsterdam and Columbus, it shall always be 1974.

2.

Parlor game: in which city do you imagine yourself
And what do your imagine yourself doing
At the moment when, without warning or apology,
The world comes to an end? Variant: imagine
The circumstances of your own death. Assume,
No doubt erroneously, that death occurs only
When we have readied ourselves for it and that
We do this in our dreams. In the dream you have
All cities and all time zones to choose from.
Where will it be — at an oyster stand near
The intersection of two broad boulevards in Paris,
A London club in 1850 or a Viennese coffee house
Fifty years later? A smoky upstairs bedroom in the Casbah?
Getting off a bus in Jerusalem, at night?
I saw myself
In Vienna, where I've never been, walking on a street
Much like the Rue Soufflot in Paris. I swear I saw
Lightning while the sun was out, and it gently rained.

3.

The traveler regaled us with stories, touching and true,
About the people he had met on his sojourns
In strange cities. Better yet were the stories
Edged with menace: the sense that something odd

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Was about to happen in the railway station in Milan,
And it did, only his train had long since departed
And he was nearing Geneva when the bomb in Milan
Went off; or the story about the corpulent man,
Bewigged and wearing a judge's black robe
At La Coupole in Paris, over a café crème one morning
In 1977, who confided to the table at large
That news of Elvis Presley's death would be
Reported a week later—which happened,
Thus quickening interest in the corpulent man,
Who had disappeared in the meanwhile. But best of all
The traveler's tales were the ones he made up –
No, not made up, recalled—of cities
Where he had never been: sinister Berlin and seedy Sofia,
The carved portals of Vienna in its brilliant light,
Copenhagen during an unseasonably warm December,
Rio, Buenos Aires, Haifa, Hong Kong, Prague.

Bridget Fahrland

WHAT IS PAST

Although I have a constant shedding skin,
that flows inward and under the ocean
of all occurrence, matters will surface
though never quite complete. Hence, this nervous
condition, a shadow hinged to my feet,
will dissolve when matter and darkness meet.
Until such a time, my mere achievements
shall remain listed by sense not sequence.

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Stuart Dischell

COLUMBUS: CHORUS & MONOLOGUE

I

Feeble among the palm trees.
Malaria buzzed through his sleep.
And the sun did not warm him
As it struck the branches.
Beyond the archipelago
Portuguese Asia waited.
The colonies saddened him.
The Queen had been kind;
Her husband, shrewd.
The coins of the believers
And the murdered Jews
Outfitted his ships.
The crew became lawless:
Natives withheld supplies.
From the lean-to he predicted
The 1504 solar eclipse.
Transporter of wonders,
He died at court in Spain,
Having ridden muleback
To Valladolid from Seville.
Thirty-six years later,
Below decks, in their coffins,
The bones of the Admiral
And his son Diego
Sailed again for Hispaniola,
Accustomed as they were,
Travelling one world to the other.

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II

The body of land seen at a distance
Is a beautiful, threatening person who
Known in detail, surveyed, charted,
Interests less than my first inventions,
As in fancy lies the buried seed
From which an ordinary flower blossoms.
Having had hopes of more brilliant things,
Painted creatures, orchidean wonders,
Tidepools of talking fish, or the animal
That stands upon the water and resembles
A mermaid to the woman-hungry sailor,
I know there is such a thing as mirage
To a landless traveller. Beyond beyond
Lies the Western Passage, twisting rivers
And the bays that promise, a shore,
Where island animists learn the nature
Of what we call our nature.
To peer through a glass is to discover
The beauty of emptiness and the terror
Of all that seek to fill it.
Across across grow the spices, jewel-
Bedecked maidens whose fathers, rich
As kings, keep fewer advisers. To claim
A monarch's ear is more valuable than his throne,
When the explorer can create the belief
That something far brighter than the crown
Will reflect him well for now and forever;
The purposes of God and voyages for treasure.

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Don Bogen

THREE CRADLE SONGS

Norman Dinerstein, composer
1937-1982

When sowers scatter wind
under the whirling sun
burlap sacks swing
with the light's motion.
The rocking glide of work
and slowing clock of flesh
round the day. When seed
tumbles like a wish
on darkening air it sings
what no one hears.
At work's end the field
is whispering stars.

*

All domestic things. The first alert
rap of coffee on the tongue, the fit
of the mug's familiar handle, winter light
fresh through kitchen windows and the half-burnt
smell from the toaster filling a warming room.
The body is a house. Praise it. Praise morning
in its various common songs: linoleum
creaking underfoot, the saucepan's thrum,
the small precise egg timer ringing and ringing

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*

This dim aubade. A chorus of chummy frogs would be better.
Or wild bells. Or a kind of skitter faster than a rag.
Dry notes for the tongue's brandy, the warm skull's glittering
eyes.
Dry memory's a thin score. Time dulls the timbre.
Our labor: to pluck, scrape, pound, fluid struggle of a voice–
the beautiful imperfect work that will not bring you back.

Laurence Breiner

IN THE GREAT RIFT VALLEY

for Jacob Bronowski

From the deep soil of Poland, pungent as cabbages,
he travelled a human life to La Jolla,
traumatized ground shearing against itself,
ready to flood back into the sea
where the moon left a gap when it went to heaven.

Now, in this startled African landscape,
his California spectacles berserk
with light, he cradles in his hands
the skull of an unimaginable girl
here so many million years.

No tremors. He takes it in
as his figure soaks up the light
older than man or girl
bawling from unchristened rock:
He wants us to see.

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She, barely she,
without age, without hair,
without eyes to widen,
without legs to carry her away,
feels nothing

but here
in the desolate womb of time
— the pat on the head,
the knuckle under the chin —
there is something he feels.

Something happened here.
The flesh of the continent split
accepting some seed; some grace
planted this furrow when the moon was reaped
and brought forth daughters.

One crop exhausted the garden,
left this wound, sealed by a sword turned every way.
Behind, the clamor of Pacific trenches, and Poland
mulched with his generation yet another wound.
Between him and African infancy this glaring fault.

In the socket of Eden these two
silence the sun's stuck klaxon
with a passion enigmatic as a skull
that fathers a simple human light,
ancient and mild as morning on green fields.

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Karen Wilkin

AT THE GALLERIES

The notion of what sculpture could be—even of what could be thought of as sculpture—changed irrevocably in the late 1920s when Pablo Picasso and his compatriot Julio-González began to build angular, linear objects with slender pieces of metal. Architecture had already abandoned symmetrical stone massing in favor of light frameworks, transparency, and symmetry; now sculpture did the same. Picasso and González made planar, skeletal sculptures by putting together disparate elements, instead of carving or modelling solid volumes, as sculptors had done in the past. Traditional sculptures were self-contained masses that excluded their surroundings; Picasso and González's constructions were all line and edges. These open structures, penetrated by space, had to declare their unlikeness to the rest of the world by other means, by formal daring.

It was sculpture that came out of painting, out of the fictive planes and transparencies of Cubist paintings and the real planes of Cubist collage. Its subject matter was not particularly new. Picasso and González's heads and figures owed little to the legacy of Greece and Rome, but the same could be said of the work of many other inventive twentieth-century sculptors—Brancusi, for example—who nonetheless continued to employ traditional methods of carving and casting. What set Picasso and González's work apart most clearly was what it was made of and how it was made. Instead of stone and bronze: scrap metal, iron, and steel—industrial materials with no freight of art history; instead of time-honored fine art techniques: the same methods used to construct the frameworks of tall buildings and the bodies of automobiles.

Since the late 1920s, many forward-looking sculptors including, among others, David Smith in the United States and Anthony Caro in Great Britain, embraced these new notions of what sculpture could be, using them as a basis for invention the way earlier sculptors once used the conventions of Greek and

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Roman art, testing the expressive limits of Picasso and González's new language. For a time, sculptors who worked in this way seemed to be asking how much could be left out before a sculpture stopped being a sculpture. They exaggerated the differences between construction in metal and the traditional monolith, avoiding massive volumes and (especially after Caro) verticality. The practitioners of what was called "the new sculpture" avoided, too, materials associated with more traditional art. It wasn't simply that welded iron or steel permitted forms to be dissected in ways impossible to carved marble or cast bronze. Using the materials and methods of industry was a declaration of independence from the past, a declaration of modernism.

Exciting sculpture was provoked by this set of assumptions, but in the past two decades or so, young sculptors raised on the "new tradition" of constructing in metal began to regard the legacy of Picasso and González as a convention as powerful as carving neoclassical figures in marble. As a result, we have seen (often very successful) investigations of the capabilities of plastics, glass, light circuitry and the like, newfangled materials, but still within the industrial tradition and, frequently, already explored by like-minded artists when they had first become available. More startling, substances previously unassociated with anything that could remotely be called sculpture—dry pigment, leather, branches, draped felt, rope, hay, fat, ostrich eggs, children's toys—have turned up with increasing frequency. Paradoxically, so have wholly traditional bronze and stone. In part, I suspect, this is a reaction or, at least, a counterpoint to the reductive austerity of Minimalism, arguably the most extreme permutation of Picasso and González's original conception. But more important, this expanded lexicon of materials permits the construction of forms impossible to achieve with more usual materials (as was true, once, of working in welded steel). The result is, while not necessarily a proliferation of better sculpture, an expansion of sculpture's territory as dramatic as that occasioned by the adoption of industrial technology more than half a century ago. Curiously, though, while Picasso and González derived much of their energy and stimulation from rejecting the past, present-day sculptors are reexamining tradition in an effort to revitalize their work. It's not limited to the younger generation, although it seems to be getting most of the credit for the phenomenon.

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The exhibition, *Four Americans: Aspects of Current Sculpture,* at the Brooklyn Museum this spring, was fairly typical. It brought together approximately ten years' work by Joel Fisher, Mel Kendrick, Robert Lobe, and John Newman, all about forty years of age, in one direction or the other, and all working in New York. Their work is faintly organic, or, at least, not strongly geometric, and they all seem indebted, in varying degrees, to European sculpture other than Cubist construction in metal. Beyond this, they are quite unlike one another.

The show provided capsule views of each sculptor's development. Joel Fisher, for example, had his recent attentuated bronzes set in the context of drawings and sculptures from the late seventies and early eighties, spare images that teeter between geometry and allusion, and biomorphic bronzes from the mid-eighties, like homages to Rodin, Arp, and perhaps Brancusi. Fisher's distaste for the vernacular American idiom of, for example, David Smith, and his preference for a more elegant, semifigurative brand of prewar European modernism is palpable. It's potentially a stimulating notion, to judge by his earliest works in the show, but in his recent pieces, it seems to get in the way of what his sculpture is about. The recent works are skinny bronze "drawings," adapted rather directly from Fisher's stripped-down drawings in two dimensions, in turn evocative of Arp's dropped string pieces. The laboriously cast and worked bronze seems at odds with Fisher's nervous line. Surely steel, with its ability to be both very thin and very strong, would have been more suited to those linear forms, but maybe that's the point. Still, there is something perverse about Fisher's insistence on this kind of physical alliance with the past. It makes his recent sculptures a little too precious, a little too crafted, a little too much like Art.

Mel Kendrick is probably the most interesting sculptor featured in the Brooklyn show. He's certainly the one with the broadest reach, from the delicacy of his early wall-mounted constructions of laminated, painted wood to the sturdy articulations of his freestanding wood and bronze structures of a few years ago. Kendrick's modestly sized works immediately suggest Cubist ancestry, but he seems to take as his point of departure the blocky sculpture of Henri Laurens or Jacques Lipchitz rather than the metal constructions of Picasso. The African carvings that engaged the Cubists' attention in the first place appear to fascinate

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Kendrick as well. Unlike any of his colleagues in the show, he seems to have some idea of how his American predecessors responded to this heritage. Like David Smith's totemic figures, Kendrick's chunky structures are more or less human in size and stand before us, like fellow beings, perched on rather expedient table legs. The best Kendricks of this type are personal and animated, with a rough-hewn character (literally) that provides relief from his tendency to overembellish his sculptures with drawing, color, and finicky divisions.

Unfortunately, Kendrick's proclivity toward craft seems ascendant in his more recent works, where overly careful delineation of form struggles with polychrome lamination and drawn lines. Kendrick may be aware of the problem, since some of his newest sculptures, less scrupulously finished and apparently more directly made, suggest that he is increasingly interested in the unworked state of his materials, possibly in the way his sculptures look at early stages in their evolution. In these, however, the character of the original chunk of wood remains all too evident, so the sculpture has an unfortunate overtone of chewed tree trunk. Kendrick's work of five years ago or so promised better than this, and I suspect that he is a more interesting artist than the selections in the Brooklyn show implied.

Yet Kendrick is not alone in succumbing to a fascination with craft or in relying too much on overliteral allusion to nature, perhaps in an effort to load his work with "meaning." Robert Lobe's sculptures are essentially transcriptions of hunks of actuality, like three-dimensional rubbings of bark textures or wood grain. Lobe hammers sheets of aluminum over selected boulders or tree roots, or both when trees have obligingly grown over boulders, using the natural configuration as a base for *repoussé* modelling. He says that he likes the way his technique produces the appearance of mass with a thin skin of metal, and he likes, as well, the contrast between his industrial materials and his organic, out-of-door subject matter. About a year ago, I saw a large piece of Lobe's installed above a descending stairway. Walking beneath it was extraordinarily unpleasant, since the piece was both threateningly rock-like and, from some viewpoints, nastily sharp-edged. The works in the Brooklyn show had none of this sense of menace, but that is the most that can be said for them. I kept thinking of Saul Baizerman's *repoussé* copper figures, of the

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foil-wrapped pipes of Warhol's Factory, and of Christo—a peculiar combination.

The fourth sculptor in the Brooklyn exhibit, John Newman, appeared to have been chosen as much because of his work's unlikeness to any of the others' as for its own merits. In contrast to Fisher's old-worldness, Kendrick's underlying Cubism, or Lobe's verbatim transcriptions of landscape, Newman's elaborately constructed objects are evocative both of high tech and natural growth—seedpods, for instance. There's something "moderne" about them, too, like Gabo or Pevsner turned into metal. The strangest thing about Newman's pieces is how unsculptural they are. Despite their deep interior spaces and their convolutions, they often seem unconsidered, just as the way they meet the floor or touch the wall seems arbitrary. Newman's work looked more like a group of large-scale models of microscopic structures or demonstrations of arcane mathematical propositions than examinations of challenging sculptural notions.

The Brooklyn show suggested, if nothing else, that at least some current American sculptors are reevaluating their perceptions of the past and of the natural world. The interviews in the catalogue, however, implied that for the exhibition's curator, the overwhelming question was how the four saw themselves in relation to Minimalism. Fortunately, the answers were more wide-ranging than the questions. The interviews made it clear that the four sculptors are thinking about things that could engender exciting art, but as is so often the case these days, their ideas, both stated and implicit in their work, were more interesting than the work itself.

That has been characteristic of my experience of Siah Armajani's work, and his April exhibition at Max Protetch Gallery was no exception. Armajani's province is well defined. He scrutinizes everyday utilitarian objects—furniture or architectural necessities—and constructs elegant versions of them in a variety of materials and relationships. His recent show explored permutations of the table, constructed in a range of shiny, new, stock materials. The initial surprise of seeing pedestrian domestic objects made of unexpected stuff is exhilarating, but wears off rapidly, and the usual scale, proportions, symmetry, and so on of the generating object reassert themselves. Several years ago, Armajani seemed more willing to venture into the ir-

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rational in a series made by placing more or less intact doors and windows in relationships that wrenched them from their expected context. Yet despite the odd abuttments and intersections, the resulting constructions were peculiarly literal. They remained, prosaically, accumulations of recognizable parts that happened to be doors and windows, rather than meditations on doorness or windowness or passage or shelter. (The problem is not unique to Armajani. It plagues all artists who incorporate found objects in their work; if the object insists too much on its original function instead of being subsumed by its new context, the work usually suffers. Duchamp is, of course, the exception, since the role of his subversive ready-mades was to assault their new context with their previous histories.)

Armajani's table variants suffered for the customary reasons. No matter how extravagant their materials, how improbable the piling and inversion, they remained manifestly tables, albeit nonfunctional ones. I keep wanting to like Armajani's work better than I do. I find what he aspires to rich and potentially fascinating, but I keep being let down by what he builds. He seems too content with the givens of the objects he purports to improvise with and remarkably insensitive to nuances of thickness, regularity, horizontality, verticality, and the like. The "tables," in the end, were predictably foursquare and evenhanded. That they were useless was not enough to shift them from the realm of inert object to potent sculpture. No, I am not advocating deconstruction.

In her three more or less concurrent exhibitions, in April and May, Louise Bourgeois provided a lesson in how found objects can be transformed and turned into metaphor. She also made it plain that questioning the limits of what is proper to sculpture, perhaps even to taste itself, is not solely the province of the young. The shows, works from the 1950s at Sperone-Westwater and recent work at Robert Miller Gallery and Galerie Lelong, ranged from the mysterious to the trivial, from the resonant to pure kitsch. It was difficult to believe that the same person was responsible for all of it. Bourgeois's installations at Lelong may have been the most unexpected aspect of the three exhibitions. Unlike those of a few years ago, which were dim enclosures to be entered by the viewer, the pieces at Lelong contained entrances with stairs, housefronts with overscaled, monstrous

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"gateposts," that kept the viewer at a distance. These entrances were rigidly symmetrical, metaphorically and literally blocked. Their weathered surfaces clearly had a history, provoking thoughts about the passage of time, aging, experience, memory. The stair with the large spheres was better than the one with the blocky posts, but the cumulative effect of the ensemble was better than its parts.

Of course, the piece depended upon what Michael Fried calls "theatricality." Bourgeois's constructions wait for the viewer to attach meaning and associations to what are essentially neutral and not particularly expressive objects in the sculptural sense. That is to say, the way elements touch, the way forms are articulated in space, the way the structure meets the ground plane are not of primary importance. The object is, in itself, passive, mute; given Bourgeois's statements about the role of women, this is quite possibly deliberate. Armajani could learn something about transformation from these pieces. (The second installation at Lelong, a papery flattened version of Bourgeois's well-known piles of ambiguous rounded forms, simply wasn't in the same league as the stair pieces.)

Bourgeois's totemic sculptures and drawings from the 1950s were radically different in form but similar in spirit to the stair installation. It was good to see these unassuming but suggestive wooden sculptures again. Bourgeois threads chunks of found or recycled wood onto vertical supports, sometimes painting them, sometimes not. The resulting little columns are extremely animated, like slightly undersized figures, with a lively presence. The angular chunks of wood stacked on top of one another insistently remind you of how the columns were made, with the almost random repetition of a single action. It's not random, of course, any more than Pollock's pours were random. The association is not fortuitous. Bourgeois's black and white totems with their angular, scribbly profiles, along with the sense of their having been made by dropping one fragment of wood on top of another evoke Pollock's wiry poured paintings of more or less the same time. Bourgeois was not the only sculptor of the fifties to be interested in accumulation and repetition, even in literal stacking: Louise Nevelson's early scavenged pieces come to mind, along with many works by David Smith and his colleagues, but

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there is something satisfyingly individual about Bourgeois's combination of process and primitivism.

Bourgeois's work of the 1950s sharply criticized the cloying, virtuoso marbles she exhibited at Robert Miller, pristine geometric shapes trimmed with mottoes and questions and horrible little arms, legs, and hands. The effect was somewhere between a mass of dismembered china dolls and the nastier kind of Victorian polychrome sculpture. The marbles were beautifully made, sentimental and repellent. Bourgeois may suffer from the same inability to rise above unlimited possibilities as her late colleague, Louise Nevelson. When Nevelson constructed with worn, worked-over fragments, each with some of its own history visible despite the new context and the unifying paint, she made her best sculpture. Once she had the means to order a gross of best quality doorknobs and install them in sleek, custom-made containers, her work often lost a good deal of its edge. Bourgeois, too, seems best when she is improvising, without quite so much technique and luxurious material at her disposal.

Among the younger generation, the British sculptor Richard Deacon is being paid a great deal of attention. Last year, the Carnegie Museum of Art, in Pittsburgh, organized an exhibition of sculptures from 1985 on that has since travelled to the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, and the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. A slightly larger exhibition of works from approximately the same period was seen in Paris this spring at the Musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris. Among other accolades, he recently received a commission for an enormous piece in Toronto. Deacon's work is arresting largely because of its unexpected combinations of materials or, more accurately, because of the way he plays forms not usually associated with sculpture—things that drape, wrinkle or enclose the way a sleeve or trouser leg encloses—against tense and rigid constructions. In Deacon's most successful work of this type, there's a sense of compression and contained energy in the "stiff" portions that make the unstructured sections even more startling. Since he relies heavily on symmetry and systems to generate the rigid structures, the informal and soft elements become even more eloquent. But, particularly in Deacon's more recent work, process dominates to the point where sculpture as a whole has difficulty transcending the anecdotal nature of its making. Things that in earlier work

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read as discoveries, such as repetitions of screws or rivets, insistent patterns of fastening tabs and so on, function in recent sculptures as signature flourishes, mannerisms or decorations rather than as expressions of structural necessity.

Both the touring show and the Paris exhibition included large sculptures made of open metal channels, like giant rainwater gutters of ventilation ducts. Deacon creates complex, curved "skeletons" by fastening small increments of duct together (with tabs and rivets, of course). From some viewpoints, the outlined fruit and vegetable forms that have haunted his early work reappear, but the chief impression is of a relentless exercise in fastening things together, connecting point to point, establishing right-angle intersections. Method takes precedence over result. In his slender laminated sculptures, Deacon presses bands of wood into sinuous arcs and tight curves. There's a look of struggle in these pieces. The glue drips and clots between layers of wood; the arcs seem forced into existence. But Deacon often allows the laminated members to extend far beyond the limits of the sculpture's "force field," simply because the prolongation of a particular curve would extend that far; as a result, energy dissipates.

Deacon likes symmetry, mirror-image constructions. There are momentarily confusing views through his looping, outlined sculptures, but as you move around the pieces, the rationality of the structure manifests itself. So far, so good, but often, once you grasp the system, the piece becomes expected, predictable and less interesting. Once again, process is more engaging than result.

Critics have hailed Deacon as some sort of savior of contemporary sculpture. Clearly, he is extremely gifted and clearly, too, he is posing important questions about what constitutes sculptural form. In his most audacious works, which combine, among other things, the language of tailoring with that of the building trades, he questions what sculpture can encompass. They are potent and absorbing notions but, so far, at least, the ideas implicit in Deacon's work—as in many of his colleagues'—are more interesting and challenging than the objects he builds.

I've said that this kind of reexamination of the limits and physical properties of sculpture is not restricted to the young. For the last five or six years, Anthony Caro, the British master of economical construction in steel, has explored the possibilities of

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bronze, of organic forms, even of figuration. In his May-June exhibition at André Emmerich Gallery, Caro gave ample proof of how much he now allows into his sculpture that he once might have excluded. Caro's new work is complex and rich the way high Baroque art is; adjectives like "sensuous," "grand," and "full" come to mind. Perhaps a better analogy would be high Baroque architecture or music, with their clear underpinnings of order and harmony. Without making work that is in any way less abstract than the work that established his reputation in the early sixties, Caro now permits himself a sense of weight and mass, of implied movement that evokes the body or, more accurately, the feel of the body. The new works include rolling bronze forms and steel in gorgeous "soft" configurations.

The largest work in the show, a solemn arcade of aggressively crumpled steel forms, was one of the most powerful. For all its visual lushness, it remained lucid and severe, progressing with a steady rhythm, like the ground bass in a *Concerto grosso.* For all its large size, the piece was intimate, even better, perhaps, as you moved along its length than from a distance, good as the long views were. Forms opened and closed as you progressed, and you became acutely aware of their relation to your own body. Other works, smaller, but similar in mood, exploited the tension between full-bodied bronze forms and uncompromising steel enclosures.

As always, Caro's expressiveness comes from the way he makes things touch, from his faultless sense of scale, from the way he puts things together. Photographs tell you little about his work. Forms flatten, eloquent junctions disappear. It's difficult, too, to write about Caro's sculpture, since his own language is purely sculptural, wordless. But the authoritative presence of his work is unmistakable. Caro has grown steadily since those first astonishing steel pieces more than twenty-five years ago. His new works are among his best.

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Robert Harbison

ON THE HUDSON RIVER SCHOOL

To outsiders it must seem that Americans give the Hudson River School of landscape painters an undue prominence. But there are some powerful reasons for this: they were the first indigenous school of painters, painting American subjects in an American way. Even today they remain a functioning clause in the American declaration of cultural independence from Europe. But like Jefferson's Declaration itself, they are not so free of the old European masters as the most innocent American view suggests.

Among these paintings are fascinating documents in the necessary struggle of Americans to free themselves from tutelage without ceasing to be traditional painters, a conflict most interesting in the cases where European habit is most deeply ingrained. Like Pre-Raphaelitism in England, true Hudson River painting was very short-lived. Before long the most interesting painters tired of limited unmythologized American subjects, turning to exoticism of one kind or another, historical fantasy or far off climates, in each case a huger but more conventional idea of what is really sublime. Like Pre-Raphaelite exhibitions, *American Paradise: The World of the Hudson River School*, at the Metropolitan Museum of Art from October 1987 to January 1988, provided the spectacle of a short initial burst of fresh vision, followed by a long and trying aftermath punctuated by a few bizarre explosions (the panoramas of Church and Bierstadt).

For me the point of the exhibition was immensely sharpened by having driven down the Hudson to reach it, in the favorite season of these painters, autumn, when leaves *do* produce the Seurat-dappling of red-yellow-green which you would certainly mistrust in Thomas Cole if you hadn't verified it on distant hillsides.

Cole was the first and remains the best of the group. He was born in Lancashire and came to Pennsylvania at the age of sev-

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enteen in 1818. It took him a while to hit on painting as a career; he was in some part self-taught. And, curiously, his earlier works, before study-trips to Europe sophisticated his eye and technique, are the best and most invigorating.

Even the wildest Coles can look pretty tame nowadays. It takes concentration to grasp their originality, which is negative to a degree. Cole's great trick is an abrupt relation to his subjects. Not that there aren't some props cluttering his foregrounds, which one could mistake for conventional patter before real conversation begins. Yet these shattered trees and tilted rocks are harsh in a new way, as if they are simply themselves and not a code for disaster or threat. It is anti-Romantic and unblurred vision: one values Cole most for what isn't there.

At first it appears there's no human intrusion on the scene, until we make out the subliminal Indian on a rock brandishing his bow. I had to look three times before I saw the large warrior swallowed by his background in *The Clove, Catskills.* Thus Cole had it both ways, true emptiness and the world possessed by man. Later he showed *The End of the Deluge* as lots of rocks poking up, the Ark well camouflaged as another brown hump, but meaning something utterly different.

By such protective coloring of the human element Cole suggests he hasn't really picked a subject, so in *Schroon Mountain* there are just acres of trees, like a democratic crowd with many differences and no real individuality. Why a lot of eccentric detail of no fixed significance should be a liberating vision I'm not sure, unless one is relieved that exact knowledge of it doesn't interfere with the integrity of the wilderness.

Cole's famous painting of the *Oxbow* is another affair—and shows two worlds, the wild and the tame, cleverly superimposed to form a yin-yang of opposites which add up without literally meeting, because topography allows one to see near and far with no middle in between. Here the painter's sketches show him adjusting his own position to make the mountain close by collide more starkly with the riverbend in the distant flat farmland.

This strongly conceptual approach to space, hiding in unaffected technique, is what draws one to Cole. His friend Asher Durand is almost Cole's antithesis, at his most interesting in claustrophobic concentration on tangles of mossy rocks and roots, or the deep interior of woods where trunks and branches make

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an impenetrable fabric. It is impossible to exaggerate the importance here, as with Cole, of concentration on nearby spots. These painters made numinous places which any American could visit. "Hudson" became a word which reverberated and could be discussed in an entirely new way. And for those who had long understood the beauty of the Hudson landscape, their feelings now had a name. Even today studying the paintings is both a memory device and an extension of one's experience of the terrain. The Catskills become richer when they enter the ritual space of art.

Perhaps some will say this is only a step on the path toward a thorough taming of the wilderness. Several signs bear them out. The most famous Hudson School image of all is Durand's *Kindred Spirits.* It shows Cole and William Cullen Bryant, a nature painter and a nature writer, extolled on a rocky promontory. Behind them is an ideal conflation of Catskill scenery, its best gorge and its best falls now conjoined. The school is already memorializing itself: there are even mock-graffiti carved in one of the trees to leave a record of the momentous visit. The kindred spirits are two sister arts, or sister perceptions joined in awe of nature. That is the overarching kinship, between wilderness and man, yet who will not feel that the proportions are subtly reversed, the forest now simply the theater for human acts: by their placing, the two friends are heroic statuary presiding over haunts which their devotion has given them a claim to. Cole had recently died young, and that perishable individuality sets him apart even further from the living-dying surroundings. The painting doesn't bury him in his favorite spot, but holds him forth from it, lending it meaning which remains firmly tied to its real owner.

Painters who come after often tire of staring at the wilderness and find it easier to interpret it through human acts. Instead of well-known figures, a little like statues, these are unusually representative parties like the *Belated* one on Mount Mansfield in Jerome Thompson's painting, whose title sets the apprehensive thoughts in motion and find plenty of clues in the painting to help them in their journey downhill. Will these heedless young things survive? How much daylight is there?

Is Worthington Whittredge's *Twilight on Shawangunk Mountain* cornier or less corny because it contains its belatedness

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within? It shows a crusty hunting party huddling around a fire on the dark side of the mountain while the sun's last rays bathe the other side. Thus one has dusk and dark at a glance, through the happy chance of their seeking shelter out of the sun. We can call it a literary vision because it shows successive stages, pretending it can see both at once.

More modest painters found more ingenious solutions to the problem of how to populate the wilderness without losing what made us seek it as a subject in the first place. John Frederick Kensett is an inconspicuous painter who comes thirty years after Cole and is something of a favorite nowadays because of the chilly mathematical look he gives to natural forms, which makes an uncanny appeal to us heirs of Cubism, Constructivism, and later minimalisms. Many Kensetts look as if the people have been taken away, perhaps because his precision seems a very civilized quality, perhaps because in the midst of savage boulders is a little rickety bridge, with no one on it.

The most interesting picture in the exhibition from this point of view is of Lake George: largish islands are dotted in such a speaking pattern—separate from one another yet forming a group—that it seems a fascinating answer to the problem of how one insinuates one's puny self into these grand expanses. These lumps serve much the same formal function as those picturesque observers, of whom by now we are so very tired.

One way of deserting the wilderness, or betraying it, is subtly to populate it. In this class I would include even the stirring visions of lone warriors in their canoes heading toward a distant shore, on which wait their lone squaws. Why is it always twilight when they set out? Why is wilderness most paintable at the end of the day in the downward quarter of the year? Because one imagines that it is really gone already.

This doesn't seem exactly the spirit in which Thomas Cole left or wanted to leave the wilderness as a subject. In the 1830s Cole became tired of painting recognizable places and turned more and more to busy Gothic visions (still set in Hudson-type landscapes) or denatured religious allegories. Cole may not be so much weaker as an allegorist as he seems to me. Most people appear not to think so. Maybe it is just difficult to switch ideologies quickly while moving around a single room. Still, it isn't that the allegories are painted worse, just imagined worse. Cole's earlier

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strength was his absence of baggage. When he began to collect some, angels, old men, youths, Gothic dinner table ornaments set in woodland, rotting temples in swampland, he became more naive and less original, purveyor of childish history and morality over the natural world which now takes a backseat.

Some of the most interesting later practitioners remain painters of landscape in some sense of the word, but just barely. They flee North America and enlarge the canvas until every view is Apocalypse. The heroes of the paintings are not modest streams but towering mountains. Restive with local subjects, Frederic Church and Martin Johnson Heade turn to dream-visions of the tropics or the Andes, which no one is going to find it easy to check on, which stimulate one's sense of spatial absurdity: an immense volcano, and at its foot a tiny garden with dozens of clearly distinguished species of plant.

Church went to the Andes and the Arctic and brought Persian flavors to the banks of the Hudson (his preposterous villa, Olana). Albert Bierstadt found similar spatial effects nearer home, in panoramic fantasies of the Rockies and High Sierra. These have been praised for a maniacal fidelity, but they are really remarkable for determined demolition of a human sense of scale. Often small figures are included, herds of deer or flocks of ducks or Indians, but they are powerfully irrelevant and meant to be, for over them tower range on range of hill, shrinking and expanding in seemingly perverse fashion until one feels not that one is going regularly higher, but caught somewhere in the middle of a vast unfriendly complexity, which is the wilderness. One can from time to time withdraw, but one cannot really connect. Bierstadt's achievement is to have found a spatial formula, a bit pat it is true, for conveying that wilderness is unvisitable, and in spite of magnificent summary-visions like his own, unknowable. He put up his dead-end sign near the Western edge of the continent, and as one could predict, it was welcomed and ignored.

He is the last member of the second phase of the school when the old local loyalty has come to seem silly. Like Pre-Raphaelitism, Hudson River painting began in earnest fidelity which it traded before too many years for grandiose exoticism.

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Bob Kirsch

CÉZANNE'S PURSUIT

Among the most influential essays on Cézanne is Maurice Mearleau-Pointy's "Cézanne's Doubt." However, for all the insight contained within this piece, written by one of the most perceptive of those who have studied him, the matter of what Cézanne may have doubted and what he did not doubt is not presented with perfect clarity. For while Cézanne was certainly at times dissatisfied with how he was meeting the goals he had set for himself as a painter,he clearly showed at other times that he was very pleased with his work. Many of his actions and statements might be cited as proof, but particularly telling is that when in 1985 Ambroise Vollard began to organize a one-man show of Cézanne's work, the painter had no hesitation in providing him with (if Vollard is to be believed) one hundred fifty paintings and watercolors. This is, John Rewald reminds us, three times more than could have been exhibited in the gallery at once. Cézanne's paintings, as well as his letters and witness accounts by his contemporaries, furnish unquestionable evidence that there was much he was sure of. He was not undecided about the value of Virgil's poetry, Michelangelo's sculpture, Rubens's decorative ensembles or Delacroix's paintings; the beauty of the landscape around Aix-en-Provence (which had been his since childhood) or that of great works of art; the character of painting as a concrete art. Nor was he unsure about the importance of line and color, of planes and atmospheric effect in a composition; nor about the value one person may have for another, the capacity of God, or the palpable physical and colorful existence of an apple or a flower.

It is no secret to those who have examined Cézanne's work that he was greatly drawn to what was deeply familiar to him and had slowly become part of his immediate environment. This general propensity is a complete configuration, a structure built at least partly consciously to endure and to sustain artistic

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work that itself would endure. Pissarro, who knew Cézanne well, said of him: "All his life he has been painting the same picture": Shy and introspective, Cézanne chose to address motifs and themes with which extended contact had disposed him to feel comfortable. Thus, self-portraits fascinated him while most of his other portraits show persons he knew well, frequently members of his family. In more than half of his landscapes, he represented motifs of the area around Aix-en-Provence. Of the remainder of the landscapes, most were painted in proximity to Paris, the city to which he had journeyed as a young man to become a painter and to which he returned again and again. Almost all his still lifes contain objects familiar to the natives of Aix. Exotic objects rarely appear. His Bathers compositions are founded upon the experience of his adolescent swimming expeditions; he painted and drew hundreds of them, and it was probably to these that Pissarro referred. Thus, Cézanne chose to repeat himself frequently, exploring nuance slowly. During each state of his artistic life, he mined and refined his earlier achievement.

His tastes were not completely typical of those of the Impressionist painters with whom he associated: neither the crowds on city streets, the chic of Parisian women, the ambiance of the cafes, nor the small-town activities of country markets are given place in his work. Compared to Delacroix, Manet, Pissarro, Renoir, Monet, and other leading contemporary painters he admired, he was less cosmopolitan. He possessed, in contrast, certain of the characteristics of a contemplative. Monet's friend Gustave Geffroy wrote in 1894,"Remaining for hours and hours, days and days, before the same spectacle, determined to penetrate within it, to understand it, to express it—an obstinate creature, a seeker, diligent....There was...sustained effort....It was an unforgettable sight, Renoir tells me, to see Cézanne installed at his easel, painting, looking at the countryside....He would come back the next day, and every day, he would accumulate his efforts."

Works like *Still Life with Compotier,* 1879-80, *The Gulf of Marseilles Seen from Estaque,* c. 1885, and *Cistern in the Park at the Chateau Noir,* c. 1900, speak to the viewer of how they have been built up as part of a patient, sustained process. The balanced, nuanced interrelationships that fill each of these canvases from edge to edge reflect his perseverence in examining his motifs

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and in composing his works themselves. Each of the paintings calls forth in the viewer a pace and attitude somehow analogous to Cézanne's own. How it wishes to be seen is among the most important characteristics of each work. Each is comprehended by the viewer not all at once but gradually, so that the slow working out of what is happening within the painting is punctuated by sudden realizations of nuances of color and correspondences among objects which had not been noticed at first. Works like these tell how ordinary objects belonging to familiar scenes can become the recipients of a searching and orderly type of looking, yet one that does not restrict the viewer's mind from going where it will go. By such processes, the depth of meaning of the works comes to be seen as fully allied with the slowly ripened effort through which each had come into being.

Cézanne had long and significant relationships with his mother and son, his father, his sisters, and his wife. He painted more than forty paintings in which his wife appears among these being some of his greatest works. He made numerous drawings of her and an even greater number of his son. Others of his portraits depict his friends: Zola, Valabrègue, Boyer, Peyron, Chocquet. Throughout his life, one of the chief ways he expressed affection for a person was to make a painting of them. In the portraits of Chocquet, for example, his respect, admiration, and appreciation for this man are apparent even in how he positioned Chocquet's image on the canvas and built up the forms that describe him. In contrast, Cézanne made few portraits of persons unimportant to him.

His feeling for the religion of his family went deep. He told his niece, "If I did not believe in God, I would not be able to paint." From past art and poetry, he certainly would have been familiar with the phenomena of artistic inspiration. The testimony of Leo Larguier and others suggests that the painter felt there was a connection between his religion and his creativity, although it is not clear to what degree he had perceived this connection earlier in his life.

Personally and artistically, he was attracted to Provence, where he spent most of his life. In 1896 during a rare visit elsewhere in France, he wrote in a letter of "our old native soil, so vibrant, so harsh, and so reverberant with light." Two days later: "Where you've been born there that's it—nothing else can com-

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pare." In the landscapes of the 1870s, for example, lies evidence of what Rewald calls "a virtual rediscovery of Provence." As he grew older: "...his world became ever more restricted....Rather than venture farther away from Aix, [he] actually confined himself still more to its immediate surroundings....He remained a loner in the midst of a region where every stone, every tree, every brook was familiar to him since his youth."Cézanne wrote, "Here on the river bank, there are so many motifs, the same subject seen from another angle offers a subject of the most compelling interest, and so varied that I believe I could work away for months without changing position but just by leaning a little to the right and then a little to the left."

Accompanying his feeling for the land was an alliance he had formed with the sunshine that was so characteristic of it. His letters confirm that there was a personal basis for his artistic use of sunlight: a couplet in the first of his letters preserved, "Phoebus traversing his brilliant path/ Sheds floods of his light all over Aix"; an 1866 report that he got somewhat depressed "every evening when the sun sets and then it rains"; and a remark of 1896, "The sun is shining and the heart is full of hope. I shall soon be back at work." Compared with most of what is depicted in his paintings, the sunlight is more free, unbounded, undisciplined, continuous, pervasive. It resembles somewhat the painter's own perceptiveness, his consciousness, his conscientiousness. It is also like the artist in bringing something positive to all that is represented in the scene as well as to every particle of paint surface. What sunlight became for Cézanne was, of course, tied to what he knew it had been for certain painters and writers past and present. When in *House Behind Trees on the Road to Tholonet,* c. 1885-86, he develops the contrast of middleground sunlight and nearer shadows, and thus brings drama into this quiet work unencumbered by dark or oppressive undertones; or when in *Arbres et Maisons au Bord de l'Eau,* c. 1892-93, the light bounding off the houses and contrasting with the reflected light of the foliage generates an effect within which human feeling finds something akin to itself; or when in numerous Bathers compositions, he softly binds together the open and relaxing figures through the operation of the nuanced, optimistic sunlight—he shows his feeling for such a fundamental natural element as sunlight.

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In his letters, Cézanne speaks of beauty in connection with certain atmospheric effects, the sky, the sunlight, the landscape, and the panorama of Marseilles and the islands. He repeatedly ascribes beauty to works of art. His works show the mark of this interest. Yet he lived during a period when the sordid and distasteful were of persistent interest to writers like Baudelaire, Flaubert, Zola, and Huysmans.

His intensive study, sustained over almost fifty years, of the works of his artistic forebearers is resounding evidence for how solidly he constructed foundations for himself. The paintings and sculptures of the Louvre gradually came, in a sense, to belong to him. His own work came to be permeated with the consequences of this study. For example, while the small, colorful landscape *The Wall,* 1875-76, was most likely painted from an actual motif he observed in the countryside, the composition is allied to that of Poussin's T*he Four Seasons: Summer (Ruth and Boas)* in the Louvre. The choice of the motif in itself reflects Cézanne's attachment to the configurations of form in the Poussin. As well, the distant cluster of houses welcoming the sunlight owes something to kindred landscape elements in works by Pissarro, Corot, the painters of Barbizon, Claude Lorrain, Poussin, Titian, Giorgione, Raphael, and Giovanni Bellini.

Most obviously in compositions of Bathers and Cardplayers—but in certain portraits, landscapes and still lifes as well—he alludes to and plays with the legacy of the genres, the conventions, the possibilities of leaving the styles pure or mixing them, the themes, the modes of thinking and feeling characteristic of older art, visual and literary. Many, many examples of this might be given. Few would be as important as those relating to his use of color, one that is versatile and adaptable even in comparison with that of the other great colorists of the nineteenth century. His color has the capacity to reflect the exaggeration characteristic of certain Romanticizing works; or, alternately, the proportionateness found in a classicizing art. In various paintings, his color is somber, buoyant, quiet, busy, physical, idealizing, raw, delicate, rugged, direct, embellishing, sculptural, painterly, decorative, uncertain, direct, tenacious, assertive, hesitant, dreamy, palpable, analytical, dispassionate, sensuous, monumental, intimate, weighty, intellectual, lyrical. It changes from work to work, or within a single piece, as Cézanne

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wished. References in his work to the chiaroscuro of older art are frequent, particularly in the portraits, the still lifes, and oils like the *Mardis Gras*, 1888. He said, "With color I wish to make black and white." Recasting the chiaroscuro of Titian, Tintoretto, Carvaggio, Rubens, Zurbaran, Rembrandt, Chardin, Daumier, Delacroix and Courbet into the terms of a color that is wholly modern, he brought into being a modern form that possesses the depth, sonority and weighted structure of the painting of the museums. Roger Fry has called Cézanne's works "dramas deprived of all dramatic incident."

Although he exhibited in several of the Impressionist shows and regularly submitted works to the official Salons, Cézanne had little real "public." This was particularly so prior to the exhibition of his work at Vollard's gallery in 1895. But even before this there were those he showed his work to and who admired it: Pissarro, Monet, Renoir, Guillaumin, Caillebotte, Monticelli, Gauguin, Van Gogh, Seurat, Signac, Riviere, Corday, Zola, Cabaner, Dr. Gachet, Chocquet, Duret, Murer, Tanguy, and Count Doria. Such men knew the Louvre and would have noticed how individual figures or whole compositions—as well as the tone of voice with which theyse are enunciated—are linked to the canvases of the Louvre. They would have recognized as well the affiliations, both specific and general with the work of the moderns. Referring to Impressionism in general, Pissarro wrote, "The base of our art is evidently of French tradition, our masters are Clouet, Nicolas Poussin, Claude Lorrain, the eighteenth century with Chardin, and 1830 with Corot." However, Cézanne went beyond this. He did so not only in his study of a greater number of painters but also in how he went about linking his art to the past. He "called his compositions souvenirs of the museums." This remark, made to Renoir, reflects his ability to play with the viewer's perceptions in terms of the latter's knowledge of earlier art. Certainly, some of the writers and artists Cézanne most admired—Virgil, Baudelaire, Michelangelo, Rubens, Poussin, Delacroix, Manet—had each in his own way done the same. Yet Cézanne's way of reworking certain themes, his extraordinary skill in condensation, adds something particularly challenging to how the incorporation of his connection to the art of the past is infused into the process of the viewer's coming to terms with his work. The three, late large Bathers paintings, for

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instance, each show the admiring viewer—and there were many of these by the time they were made—that they are not only the product of over forty years of personal effort by Cézanne but as well of centuries and centuries of achievement by the artists of Greece, Rome, Italy, Flanders, Holland, Spain, and France.

He had by the time he created these works made hundreds of copies of earlier works, and engaged in much study without pencil or brush in hand. "There are, you see," said Matisse, "constructional laws in the work of Cézanne which are useful to a young painter." This is so in part just because he had penetrated into such laws in the art of the past. According to Maurice Denis's *Journal* of 1906, Cézanne spoke frequently of the contrasts in Veronese's *Marriage at Cana* in the Louvre; he had made a schematic diagram of it and then rediscovered the very same contrasts in a painting by Delacroix.

His method was to go from his works to the museums then back to the canvas and again to the museums. Of course, the rhythm at which this occurred varied greatly. However, his own paintings were thus in a sense formed as a part of his study of the art of the past. A fine example of this is provided by the groupings and the interaction of figures in the Bathers compositions. These groupings have been shaped by means of patterns of gesture, glance, interconnected pose and mutually responsive movement that actively recall those in the art of the past. Figures look at one another, respond to the glance of other figures, look deep into the space of the painting or out at the viewer, work together in handling objects, point and reach out to one another. There are as well contrasts analogous to those in the art of the museums between figures who are relatively isolated from one another and others far more actively engaged. Some of the compositions, *Three Bathers Surprised*, c. 1874-75, for example, are linked to Michelangelo's *The Bathers* (or *The Battle of Cascina*), which Cézanne had in a reproduction. The dangerous encroachment to which Michelangelo's bathers are subject interested Cézanne. (He encountered a related theme in Correggio's *Venus, Cupid and a Satyr* in the Louvre.) He was also impressed with certain of Michelangelo's specific gestures, and took some of these over for his own bathers. Others of the Bathers compositions, outgrowths of Cézanne's early multifigure compositions in which one per-sonage in the middle of a landscape is speaking while others lis-

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ten, show in numerous ways that the interaction of the figures within them has roots in that of the figures in the works of Giorgione, Titian, Veronese, Rubens, Poussin, Delacroix, Courbet, Manet and other artists. The calm, the movement, the vibrant reserve, the classical cohesiveness, the idyllic tone of the paintings are all linked to Cézanne's repeated immersions in the art of the past, and within each figure is some embodiment of this contact.

Delacroix wrote in his *Journal* of "the chief characteristic of the Classical school, which is duration." He means this in terms of what he himself would have liked to have been part of. "I call classic all works in which regularity predominates, those which satisfy the mind...also by unity and logical order, in a word, by all the qualities which increase the impression through the attainment of simplicity." Cézanne shared much of this aim, and may be seen as having actually come still closer to realizing it than did Delacroix. Cézanne's works—his still lifes, for example—speak not only of the duration bound into the existence of the sturdy, tenacious objects represented. There is as well the complementary duration of that act of perception through which they are ascertained. Was not the actual duration of his association with many of the objects, subjects, and themes he chose to put in his works an advantage for him?

His feeling for what was near at hand may also be seen in his attitude toward his artistic means. He said, "It is necessary to be workmanlike in art....To paint in accordance with the qualities of painting itself. To use materials crude and pure." He saw painting as a concrete art, and held a positive valuation of the material substance of the paint surface. All this was for him part of a sustained effort to define anew and to revivify color and drawing, plane and volume, composition and paint handling. If one examines, for example, how he painted comparatively small, vertical objects in the landscapes of the 1870s, 1880s, and 1890s, it becomes clear that he employs essentially vertical brush strokes almost exclusively and those somehow implicitly related to the vertical. How he goes about this, and the feeling and nuance he is able to convey, matures under the effects of his vast perseverence and the exceptional accumulation of experience. Vollard reports Cézanne's comment about the painter Forain: "One day at the Louvre, I saw a young man copying a Chardin. I stepped closer to

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look at his work and I said to myself, 'He'll arrive; he's working for form'." Vollard was capable of embroidering a tale, yet this one sounds somewhat reliable. What Matisse called "the exceptional sobriety" of the relationships in the *Three Bathers* was in part the outcome of the repeated tilling of a certain artistic soil .

His examination of perceptual process became one of the culminating strengths of his art. He had no doubt but that definite processes and laws are involved in perception. He wrote: "In an orange, an apple, a sphere, a head, there is a culminating point, and that point is always—despite the terrible effect: light and shade, sensations of color—the one closest to our eyes; the edges of objects flow towards a central point situated on our horizon."

And again: "This—and I am categorical on this point—cannot be contested: an optical sensation occurs in our visual organ which allows us to classify—by light, halftone or quarter tone—the areas represented by the sensations of color." He was not primarily a theorist, and his way of seeing was anything but rigid. However in this as elsewhere, he proceeded logically and founded his efforts upon material arrived at carefully and through a process of repeated reexaminations of his own opinions and experiences. The consequence of this was that his paintings possess clarity even while remaining allied to felt experience. They have a dynamic quality that comes from the persistent curiosity of the artist's mind and yet which always remains something composed, something characteristic of an essentially artistic entity.

Meyer Schapiro writes of his "concentrating on his own problems—problems he had set himself and not taken from a school or a leader." As an old man, Cézanne referred to "the fixed goal towards which I have been striving all my life." This great composer of paintings applied remarkable skill to shaping how he lived, to what Schapiro has described as "the ordering of his own life as an artist." By surrounding himself with what he knew well and deeply cared for, he succeeded in placing himself so that a considerable number of solid, familiar supports helped underpin all crucial parts of his task. For he sought to attain to where he might put extraordinary leverage—artistically, historically, psychologically—behind each movement of his brush. He possessed the instinct of knowing how to position himself—where to live, whom to speak with, what to read, where to

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look for a motif—so he would move his art to where he wished it to be. Thus it might be said that certain restrictions perhaps did not restrict him, that certain limitations did not limit him. Rather, some of these had the effect of making him as a person and as an artist more deeply and more truly who he actually was.

That Rembrandt, Chardin, Daumier, Courbet as well as Balzac, Baudelaire and Zola, had made use of the commonplace was important for Cézanne. The Goncourts, writers he admired, said of Chardin, one of his favorite painters, that he confined his art to a realm "of which he is himself a member and to which his habits, thoughts, affections, the very essence of his personality are bound....He confines himself to the representations of the scenes that touch him in his familiar environment." Since so little is generally known about how beauty and meaning enter into a work of art, it may not be unreasonable to suspect that for painters like Chardin and Cézanne, this occurred in part because of the presence of certain inconspicuous catalysts. In a period of artistic and social change—that of Balzac and Flaubert, Offenbach and Baudelaire, Napolean III and Clemenceau, Bernard and Pasteur, Bismarck and Dreyfus, Manet and Zola, Pissarro and Monet, Pius IX and Leo XIII, Hugo and Haussmann—ordinary things possessed a staying power of particular value. They are outstanding in their comprehensibility; an artist who sought to see beyond the ephemeral needed to be careful about what he focused upon. Cézanne's son has recalled his having said, "Genius is the power of renewing one's emotion by contact with everyday life." There is method in his including the same apples, cloths and furniture in over a hundred successful paintings and drawings.

The depth, nuance, resonance of his art seems to have deepened as he aged. He built a work of art as though he felt it might be destined to survive as long as Rubens's and Poussin's had already. His way of pursuing his art deserves to be studied as an authentic way of uncovering and releasing forces latent in his creative subconscious, and of tapping these for use in an art of superb organization, penetrating logic, and strong but modulated feeling. Yes, he had certain doubts about the quality of his work and about certain matters relating both to himself as a person and

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to the society in which he lived. However, such facts need not obscure what was solid and sound in how he proceeded.

Cézanne probably had read and reread Baudelaire's article on Delacroix, in which Emerson's insight is presented: "The one prudence in life is concentration." Whether or not Cézanne was particularly drawn to this remark, it points to a fundamental principle at work in how he chose to design his career as a painter. Self-portraits like those in the Phillips and the Tate express such concentration.

Goethe wrote, "It is always true, what makes the poet, the artist, the man is to limit oneself, really to need, to love, to cling to one or a few objects, to see them from all sides and to become one with them." The consequence of this for Cézanne is that he was led to a perception, an actual experience, of vast alliances, interconnections, *rapports*. At the 1907 exhibition of Cézanne's works, Rainer Maria Rilke wrote of "enduring," of "how of one piece is everything we encounter, how related one thing is to the next." He considered the advantage of our existing "simply, earnestly, the way the earth simply is, and gives her consent to the seasons." Rilke admired Cézanne's ability to show something of this sheer existence of things. One may wonder if this ability is tied to Cézanne's having known and felt certain things so securely that he was able to employ and, in a sense, go beyond them at the same time.

He said, "The artist concretizes and individualizes." The artistic harmony he realized in his work has as a foundation the thousands of sessions he had given to the gluing of his perception onto out-of-door motifs. By the time he had reached middle age, his grasp of the forms of plants, for example, was secure—that of the branch angles of the main limbs; of how branches are thickest next to the trunk of a tree and taper over the course of their length; of the sequence and cadence of intervals among the nodes on a branch; of the upward curve of the elongating tips of branches; of how the curves within the length of main branches are inflected, and how these curves contrast and harmonize with one another; of the interweaving, overlapping and interconnection among the branches of nearby plants; of the complementarity for the observer of dominantly geotropic and dominantly phototropic plants; of how the appearance of a plant is affected when it is seen through the limbs of some other plant. None of

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his investigation of plant morphology was carried out apart from his investigation of earlier art; yet, he spent more time in the countryside than in the Louvre. In 1902 he said, "To see the work of God. This is what I apply myself to." He did not wish to be literal. He did wish to be connected to the solid existence of things, and to be capable of convincing the viewer that the artist had actually seen the motif painted. Furthermore, he made of his study of nature, and this includes that of plants, a basis upon which his pictorial means are founded. "Consulting nature provides us with the means for achieving our goal," he wrote one young painter. To another, "Drawing is no more than the configuration of what you see."

He had to journey some distance before he came to the place where he was able simply to face a motif in an unassuming way. By then he understood so much about what was going on in a patch of forest or in a grouping of apples and cloth that he was capable of making great art from this alone. The shape of the enterprise itself helped him, as D. H. Lawrence says, to defeat the cliché. He was able to free himself of much unnecessary superstructure. That this is not some fantasy constructed after the fact is suggested by a note by Zola in the *Dossier for L'Oeuvre* in which he refers to "Paul, who always believed he was discovering painting." The formal rapport of his works of art are fully bound up in his sense of the unity, the affiliations, the correspondences among phenomenal entities; the connections, the interrelationships, the parallelisms that may actually be experienced by the artist in the perception of his motif.

Asked in a questionnaire, "What is your greatest aspiration?" Cézanne replied, "Certainty." He sought and he found. He said repeatedly that as a painter he had within his grasp numerous points of moral support. Many different types of support—some provided by the land and the rocks and the plants, the sunlight, the beautiful views themselves, some by his family, friends, and fellow painters, some by the ancestors he had found among the artists of the museums, some by his religion, some by less specifiable familiar things, objects, ideas, attitudes, and cultural forms—he gathered together for the benefit of his art.

One may focus on those positive forces that touched upon his creative work in part because of his decision to preserve only the more successful of his paintings and drawings. There are thou-

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sands of these. One sees that, as Schapiro has remarked, "he was capable of an astonishing variety...He admitted to the canvas a great span of perception and mood, greater than that of his Impressionist friends." The supports he had put into place helped him pursue his art with perseverence and consistency. The ephemeral and the fugitive, which occupy a prominent place in works created by some of his friends, are somewhat less welcome in his paintings. His was a deliberate pace. "Time and reflection gradually modify vision," he wrote, "and finally we reach understanding." He acted as though he knew that, as Emerson explains, "There is a sublime prudence...which, believing in a vast future—sure of more to come than is yet seen—postpones talent to genius and special results to character." Cézanne's way of proceeding is reflected in the advice he gave a young artist on "the pursuit of your art, which one must try to engage in—not without a firm basis and half-heartedly—but rather in a calm and consistent way that will not fail to lead to clear-sightedness, something very useful in guiding you firmly through life."

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BOOKS

CONTEXTUALIZING FREUD

FREUD: A LIFE FOR OUR TIME. By Peter Gay. W.W. Norton. $25.00.

Reviewers of this brilliant book who accept psychoanalysis, such as Richard Wollheim, appreciate Mr. Gay's ability "to conjure up a scene, a panorama, a story line by using some telling detail" of Freud's life and work. But detractors of psychoanalysis, such as Thomas Szasz (writing in *The Wall Street Journal,*) have used the book to savage Freud and the Freudians once again, to compare them to "our gurus and televangelists with whom American analysts must now compete." Proponents of feminist and deconstructionist criticism, such as Jill Johnston, who believe, for instance, in Mary Balmary's speculations about Freud's father's "hidden fault" (which, if analyzed, allegedly would make Freudians abandon the Oedipus complex) tend to disparage Gay's approach as old-fashioned. Gay's immediate colleagues, the historians, vote in line with their own methodological prejudices. Thus Peter Loewenberg, who favors the sort of psychohistory Gay employs, is bound to praise him. William McGrath, whose own book stresses the influence of Freud's intellectual milieu, inevitably cannot but chide Gay for focusing on Freud rather than on his environment until it "crashed in" on him. Still, Gay does weave in, for instance, a section on the First World War he calls "The End of Europe" and some pages on the Weimar Republic. He also provides an overview of the accepted role of women, of the conditions influencing the American Freudians' decisions against lay analysis, and of the circumstances that allowed for the Nazi takeover. In sum, the only thing all the reviewers agree upon is the fact that Freud was a great man.

Gay's book is impressive because it presents theoretical complexities simply without simplifying them and explains them in

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the context of Freud's evolving thinking. Gay had access to hitherto unavailable archival material (mostly correspondence), and thus is able to fill us in on delicate details surrounding Freud's death, on intimate routines of his family life, on Anna Freud's analysis. That the keepers of the archives, primarily Kurt Eissler and Harold Blum, did not make all records available led Gay to attack them in his otherwise generous bibliographical essay. This has not endeared him to the classical Freudians. Still, their criticisms are different from those accusing him of hagiography. In fact, Gay has successfully dealt with what Freud pointed to as the hazards of the biographer and has not "committed himself to lies, to concealment, to hypocrisy, to embellishments, and even to dissembling his own lack of understanding." By subjecting Freud to the psychoanalytic scrutiny he taught his followers, by focusing on Freud's most minute motivations—whether in reviewing the breaks with Adler and Jung, in noting Freud's inability to enter his patient Dora's sensibilities, or in stopping short of fully investigating the Schreber case—Gay has been critical of Freud in the way Ernest Jones in his biography was not.

Although as Freud's analyst, Gay accepts Freud's shortcomings and foibles, he does point out that "the psychoanalysts of the first generation employed an intrusive style that would have been wholly out of place in the discourse of other mortals." Gay criticizes Freud for having turned so many of his erstwhile friends into his enemies. For instance, he saw "Wilhelm Fliess everywhere, incorporated in others." Moreover, "Freud's most powerful interests suspiciously resembled exigent pressures, unresolved tensions"; *Totem and Taboo* "productively translated" his most intimate conflicts and his most private quarrels into material for scientific investigation; and his *Leonardo* is a severely flawed performance. He also was cool and detached, without real sympathy for "poor Tausk's death."

Perhaps Gay could have been even more critical of Freud's cooperation with William Bullitt on the writing of the biography, *Thomas Woodrow Wilson.* Yet he does state that the book is scornful, narrow, almost a caricature of applied psychoanalysis; that "Freud's ideas are grossly simplified, pugnaciously stated, and coarsened out of all recognition." However, this is not enough for Szasz, who faults Gay for suggesting that the Wilson book, which was finished in 1932 and published in 1966 (shortly after the

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death of Wilson's widow and twenty-seven years after Freud's death), might have been primarily Bullitt's work. Gay informs us that Freud took on this project because he thought it might infuse the financially failing psychoanalytic *Verlag* with needed funds; and that it was motivated also by his irrational anti-American sentiments—which "run through Freud's correspondence like an unpleasant monotonous theme." In my opinion, these are severe criticisms, yet they apparently are not severe enough for Mr. Szasz—who finds that "Mr. Gay has abandoned all historical objectivity" in this "amateurish and boring" book.

Gay points out that Freud always was surrounded by women: in childhood by his beautiful, dominant young mother, his Catholic, mysterious nurse, his niece Pauline, and the five younger sisters—born before he was eight years old. He had exceedingly attractive analysands, Lou Andreas-Salomé and Hilda Doolittle, and admiring female disciples such as Helene Deutsch, Joan Riviere, Jeanne Lampl-de Groot, Ruth Mack Brunswick, Marie Bonaparte, and his daughter, Anna. At home, his wife Martha and her sister Minna saw to his comfort. Gay states too that his mother—who lived to be ninety-five—not only worshipped her first-born "golden son" but continued to exert her power over him. Therefore, Gay observes, he "almost deliberately...exiled mothers to the margins of his case histories", and he "had good reason to find the subject of woman somewhat mysterious, even a little threatening." Gay concludes, after presenting the major theoretical arguments among Freud and his women disciples, that his explorations of this "dark continent of women" produced "a map that had many white, empty spots and was misdrawn in ways researchers have come to recognize after his death."

Next to his view of women, Freud's attitudes toward his Jewishness have led to the strongest disagreements. Just as in his earlier book *A Godless Jew*, Gay once again emphasizes Freud's atheism. He does not omit the significance of Freud's membership in B'nai Brith and he does justice to the discussions surrounding Freud's *Moses and Monotheism* (Moses was said to be Egyptian). Gay recognizes that Freud identified himself as a Jew, but he gives more weight to Freud's insistence that psychoanalysis is not a "Jewish science" and to the many expressions and

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proofs of his irreligiosity. Here, I believe, Gay plays down the fact that Freud was a totally cultured Viennese, a bourgeois as well as a Jew. Like Goethe's Faust, this type of Jew was riddled with ambivalence, by the fact that "two souls dwell[ed], alas! in [his] breast." Like his less gifted fellow Jews, Freud too had incarnated "the spirit that always denies." And like them he was "far more Jewish in the face of anti-Semites than at home." Freud did not reject his roots, and his quest for truth was relentless. That it did not lead him to foresee the danger to the physical survival of every Viennese Jew does not detract from his stature and indicates only that politics, as Gay also shows, was not his *forte*.

In any event, Gay's assessment of the total Freud is lucid enough to initiate the novice into psychoanalysis, and it provides enough new information to satisfy the sophisticated reader.

EDITH KURZWEIL

VIRGINA WOOLF'S EARLY ESSAYS

THE ESSAYS OF VIRGINIA WOOLF. VOLUME I, 1904-1912. VOLUME II, 1912-1918. Edited by Andrew McNeillie. Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich. $19.95, $22.95.

Like many an Edwardian writer, Virginia Woolf got her education in public, as a book reviewer. Some of the others were fortunate to have been at Oxford or Cambridge, and at a good school before that. But Woolf was the daughter of Leslie Stephen, eminent Victorian critic and first editor of the *Dictionary of National Biography*, so she received only the most rudimentary and haphazard lessons at home, and no university education at all. For many daughters of the educated class, the family's own library and atmosphere were thought adequate, to be supplemented by some music and French lessons perhaps; but systematic or rigorous training was scanty. Among much of the "intellectual aristocracy," this was a common fate, and for every young woman who became Virginia Woolf, there were countless others who barely learned to spell or think consecutively or

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go beyond counting on their fingers. Despite this widespread indifference of educated parents to the education of girls, some young women did learn to write, perhaps from hearing all of Scott read aloud nightly in the drawing room for an hour and a half, and then being left alone to read. It was some such fortuitous conjunction of circumstances that prepared Woolf to benefit in public from the education she had missed earlier.

The succession of essays, reviews, and other articles written by the young Virginia Stephen from 1904 until 1912, and by the older Virginia Woolf from 1912 until her death in 1941, would be astonishing had she written nothing else. These two volumes of essays, however, are to be followed by four more volumes of essays, which will take their places on bookshelves already holding six volumes of Woolf's letters, five volumes of her diary, the eight novels, the shorter fiction, the biographies, the prose works.* No English school or university of the late nineteenth century can claim her as a beneficiary of their accumulated wisdom, but many of their alumni might have been happy to produce half or a quarter as much interesting work as Woolf did without enjoying the tutelage and ambiance of those ancient communities. Inevitably, she was always aware of their existence and weight, she wrote from within that awareness knowingly, turning a deprivation into an advantage. She was also well placed to benefit from the encouragement of mentors from that world. Their suggestions expanded her range, their judgements excited her curiosity, and their enthusiasms led her to thoughts and experiences that might not have reached into her father's library.

She made good and thrifty use of all her reading, picked out the outlines of the important problems, and even learned quite early to write intelligently about things that might be only vaguely known to her, for example, the Lakes, as seen by Wordsworth, on the one hand, and Canon Rawnsley (founder of the National Trust), on the other, or the history of Spain, or life in a French chateau. She had never been to the Lakes, although Leslie Stephen went climbing there; she had spent only a few days in Spain and Portugal; and she had no experience of French chateaux or the French countryside but could absorb the weight

* *Volume III, 1919-1924* ($22.95) of the *Essays* was published just as this issue was going to press. Like the earlier volumes, it is ably edited by Andrew McNeillie.

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and feel of her subject from reading about it. The very absence or ignorance or inexperience of something could itself be part of the subject, a theme she would develop in a number of reviews and essays, approaching a subject through imperfect knowledge or a partial perspective, which is deftly used in several essays, and would be used with great feeling in the later essay, "On Not Knowing Greek."

The young Virginia Stephen's efforts are sometimes slightly solemn, even portentous and humorless, occasionally arch in their references, and perhaps too respectful; there is the liberal use of the editorial "we," which in its declension to "us" and "our" conveys an unpleasant sense of massed opinion. Sometimes the tone of the early reviews recalls to the reader how much she worked alone, intensively, and under the ambiguous guidance not of teachers and masters but of editors whose interest naturally lay more with the advancement of their own periodicals than in the education of their new young contributor. But it was the only education she would get, and she kept on with it, reading and then commenting in her notebooks on what she read, learning how to work better, and forming something like an individual style. After her marriage to Leonard Woolf in 1912, her world enlarged, and, despite intermittent but severe mental illness, she persevered as a writer, using her essays as a counterpoint to the fiction she had begun to write. By then, she was writing primarily for the *Times Literary Supplement* and learning to fit her own individual expression to a specific form required by that literary weekly, which began publishing only two years before she had begun her own writing career.

The reading notebooks Woolf kept throughout her life document the serious responsibility with which she approached her work and the enduring interest certain subjects had for her. During the fourteen years of reviewing covered by these two volumes, Woolf returned several times to many of the same writers and subjects, as she would do repeatedly during her more than thirty-five years of literary journalism. Later, several of the early reviews might be recast and recomposed into new essays on a writer or subject, as she did with Lady Dorothy Nevill, the Victorian eccentric. Repeatedly throughout her working life she would engage the same interesting questions in terms of different examples—questions of literary form, of individual expres-

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sion, the reality of the fictional world, the vividness of life expressed in letters, landscape, emotions in poetry, contemporary writers, the Russians, the past, the Victorians, the question of bad writing, the War, the Elizabethans. But what gives all these essays their special and distinctive quality is that they were written by an active *reader*, someone who read with pencil in hand, whose working model of the literary life was not of a series of isolated triumphs or assaults, but of a continuing exchange; she read in order to respond and be responded to, not merely to absorb the imagination of another. She read to write, as it were. This gave a direction to her reading, an economy to her responses, and it implied that others would be reading *her* in the same fashion—attentively, seriously, and expectantly. The daughter of Leslie Stephen clearly kept up a kind of subtle argument with the ideas and positions expressed in his *Hours in a Library*, but his was not the only authoritative voice she heard. Established reputations and accepted canons exerted their power; she knew the obsessive English need to rank all writers against one another and also against the writers of the past. So, casting her observations in those terms, she would take advantage of that framework to question the guardians of literary merit. She might solemnly address "those who have so far solved the difficulties of [Meredith] that they wish to make up their minds as to his final position in English literature." Or, confronting some of the venerated classics of the canon, she would suggest that it might be "wholesome to make sure that they still earn their pedestals and do not merely cast their shadows over heads bent superstitiously from custom." The reader may be reminded here and elsewhere that Woolf would never escape altogether from the obsession with ranking that permeated the *Dictionary of National Biography*, the major work of her father's lifetime, which surrounded her childhood.

In our own context, Woolf's essays may seem quite unpolemical. They do not "promote" writers or points of view, even those obviously cherished by the writer, nor do they advance specific social and political positions, despite their obviously personal tone and approach. Instead of such explicit warfare against tendencies or trends, the reader finds interesting distinctions which can be taken on to the next essay, or set against other observations, or introduced into a related argument in another es-

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say. Perhaps this kind of distinction developed because the young Virginia Stephen began writing with the ambition to join a conversation that had already begun, so there was a necessity not so much to polarize or polemicize, but rather to add, modify, propose alternatives, and to complicate a discussion framed by received ideas.

Would it be of any use to consider these essays as having been written by the *language itself,* the expression of autonomous textuality, rather than of a certain young woman, of a known social context, living in the London of Edward VII and George V? Obviously, some aspect of the style and tone may be typical of the period, or of the periodicals she wrote for: *The Cornhill* was quite different from *The Guardian, The National Review,* or *The Times Literary Supplement.* She didn't invent her own language but used what was at hand, the language learned in the nursery and in the books in the family's library, the language of her brothers and sisters, of relatives and family friends, the language of the periodicals that came into the house or that was heard at the tea-table or at night when Leslie Stephen read aloud, the language picked up in the scullery or overheard perhaps when the children peered over the bannisters at the parents' evening parties. The emphasis and images, however, the phrasing, the development of a specific style, represent an individual modification of the language received. This can be seen clearly if Woolf is read with her contemporaries, at the moment when she shares with them *les mots de la tribu.*

Thus, in essays on the Victorians, it would not have been surprising if this modernist writer had summoned her considerable gifts in a dazzling display of wit, irony, and the new spirit, at the expense of the ponderous heritage bequeathed to the Edwardians and Georgians. She could have mounted a critique in the spirit of *Eminent Victorians,* which her friend, Lytton Strachey, would publish in 1918. Like him, she disdained High Victorian forms of expression, and thought the modern spirit was analytical, ironic, and free of the illusions of the past. What she did instead, in commenting on a book of Victorian tales, for example, was to take note of the art of telling sentimental stories, which was a distinct Victorian specialty:

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> They heard a sad story; they were genuinely moved by it; they wrote it down straightforwardly, asking no questions and without a trace of self-conciousness; and this is what we cannot do, and this is what we find most strange in them.

Then she was able to see not only what the Victorians thought they were doing but that it was done in good faith and sincerity, and yet, in spirit, how discontinuous with her generation—this took her beyond simple reactive irony. It permitted a further perception of the imaginative dissonance all modernist writers felt with Victorian art and with

> the Victorian passion for getting Nature perfectly accurately, for her own sake, into poetry. And when, with much observation, much matching of words and similies, the right description is found, down it goes, and the emotions of the poem pass round it as if it were an island in mid-stream and leave it unmoved.

So much is being said here, and so effectively, that the whole passage could be glossed at length. What makes it worth reading now, more than seventy years later, is precisely the unmistakable individual voice, and the sound of distinctions which do not only reflect the spirit of the age. Strachey would be much harder to read now, for example. Other Woolf essays on the Victorians exhibit a similar sense of aesthetic difference and distance, arising from her vivid contradictory responses. Woolf was not always anxious to reconcile contradictions, but gleaned something from the disparity—such as that between a great novelist and a great writer, or between the vocabulary of a poet and the inspiration of a poet, between honesty of imagery and the honesty of the poetry expressing it; she had doubts about form conceived as a precious stone shaped to fit exactly into a ring, or about writing beautifully in English,;she wondered why some writers could do it so well, how bad literature possesses "the quality of unfettered imagination," how some poetry is made almost entirely out of emotions received from books, in language learned from books. Observations and distinctions like these are still of absorbing interest, and the reader looks forward to reading again in collected form the essays in the four volumes still to

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come. Not every production of the language of the period would kindle that interest.

SONYA RUDIKOFF

DENIS DONOGHUE'S AMERICA

READING AMERICA: ESSAYS ON AMERICAN LITERATURE. By Denis Donoghue. Alfred A. Knopf. $22.95.

Anyone who reads in the larger realm of letters knows that Denis Donoghue is a critic of formidable resource. The author of eleven previous books,including last year's *We Irish*—the first panel of a tripytch, of which *Reading America* is the second—Donoghue is at once energetic, thoughtful and erudite, something of a one-man task force on literature. I tender this last as an assertion essentially positive. But I am aware, as I write, that the phrase can be twisted, not unfairly, into an oblique pun. For Donoghue all too often asks us to accomplish the task of his prose before we can fully register the force of his intellect.

Reading America is a case in point. Indeed, his section division into "Essays" and "Brevities" could be rechristened "Chores" and "Rewards." Two very different kinds of prose share a single set of covers. The longer pieces—on Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman, Dickinson, Henry Adams, James, Eliot's "Gerontion," Stevens and Trilling—are mostly essays for solemn occasions; they are contributions to symposia or else meditative excogitations for stately, plump journals like *The Southern Review* and *Nineteenth Century Fiction*—and they read like it. The shorter, sprightlier "Brevities" were done as reviews, mostly for *The New York Times Book Review* and *The New York Review of Books.* In these Donoghue deals with American modernists like Aiken, Moore, Crane, Ransom, Tate, Lowell, Plath, Berryman, and H. D. Reading the collection straight through reveals a great deal not just about Donoghue's own strengths and weaknesses as a stylist (and, dare

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I say, a thinker) but also about the vastly different levels upon which the literary community conducts its business.

First business, then pleasure. Donoghue's lead essay, entitled "America in Theory," takes the occasion of a conference in American Studies held in Salzburg in 1975 to report that American letters are a mythy place, subject to every possible interpretative bias; and to assert, as well, that disinterested discourse is next to impossible. "You think you are talking about an American novel," writes Donoghue, "but before you are well begun you find yourself reflecting on the exercise of power in the world." Aha, thinks the reader: Donoghue will now track this double helix of fiction and reality back to the founding of the American imagination.

Wrong. The opening salvo bears no relation to the contents that follow. The separate essays are just that—separate. Donoghue roams without compass through the chambers of rarefied discourse. Veterans of the MLA circuits might not bat an eyelash, but the intelligent lay reader to whom this trade book is presumably directed doesn't stand much chance.

The problem with Donoghue's "Essays" section is fourfold. First, while his roster of "masters" is unimpeachable, his topic choice is obscure. Why a close reading of Eliot's "Gerontion"? Why a detailed commentary on James's *The Sense of the Past?* Scrutiny only matters where the larger context has been identified. Second, even with respect to his selected specimens, Donoghue is needlessly vague. He very often launches *in media res,* disclosing no precipitating need or destination—even the reader with a ready interest in a specific topic has to keep wiping his glasses. Third, the integration of elements within a given essay is often woodenly schematic. "Henry James and *The Sense of the Past,*" for instance, comes to us in two parts. In Part I, Donoghue lectures on the ways that the literary imagination appropriates History. The section is subdivided into four thematic chunks: Acceptance; Acceptance, with Reservations; Rejection; and Rejection, with Regret. The points within these subsections are set out in numbered paragraphs. With Part II, Donoghue plunges us abruptly into a dissection of James's novel. The reader is baffled: first a transmogrified outline, then a condensed grad school thesis. Whatever relation obtains between the two remains to be discovered.

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Finally, the style is all too often in the mode of academic-impenetrable. Where it is not bristling with allusions (Donoghue is nothing if not well read), it meanders like an aging river. The voice is abstract, high-toned, cowing. Here is a short extract from "Emerson at First":

> In Emerson, the mind holds its power by keeping its distance, and by enforcing the distance between an object and its destiny. It is the mind's power to do this which ensures that no account of life is necessarily predicated upon a crisis or a rupture. Two forms of satisfaction are entailed. The mind is not intimidated by what it deals with, and a sense of history can proceed on the assumption not of ruptures and dissociations but of a continuous sufficiency of soul to the world it lives in.

I have to believe that it's the writing—its degree of abstractness—and not my reading that makes the difficulties. The idea of an enforcement of a "distance between an object and its destiny" begs for clarification. And how does that distance avert such a predication? *Two* forms of satisfaction? Of what sort? Why two? I could go on.

I presume that Donoghue's discriminating intelligence is there behind the sentences. But must it be like God's own—everywhere present, nowhere visible? Passages in other essays have shown me how lucid Donoghue can be. He has only to give his reader some purchase on his argumentation. Then his subtlety and grace are manifest. The following insight, on Stevens, is delivered with all of its fine feathers intact:

> What then does Stevens want? Not the satisfied prescriptions of intelligence, however much he reveres intelligence; because it excludes too much. But he is not willing to hand himself over to irrationality–as Surrealists do–because that would also exclude too much. What he seems to want is either that the mind will transform itself, and run so wildly beyond or beside its official forms as to include the irrational in its processes. Or else that the mind, coming to the end of its processes, will point beyond itself toward images it cannot predict or specify, images corresponding to "the hum of thoughts evaded in the mind."

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The pieces in "Brevities" come as a shockingly pleasant surprise. Clearly nothing is as tonic for certain writers as a clearly enforced word-limit. Thoughts which might ordinarily drape themselves every which way over the object of scrutiny are suddenly compact and direct. Concrete reference and example abound; there is a sense of direct involvement with the writer, the text. The Donoghue we read on Marianne Moore is not the Donoghue we read earlier on Emerson:

> Gusto, impression, "domination of phrase": under any name it was the sign for which Moore, an undozing reader, stayed vigilant. Tokens of it might be found anywhere, hence distinctions between the constituents of popular culture and high culture didn't preoccupy Moore. She found instances of gusto in a handout from the New York Yugoslav Information Center, the Duke of Windsor's account of his garden, the Central Park Zoo, certain paper knives, strokes in penmanship, the sinuousness of a snake, clothes designed by Worth.

When Donoghue allows his judgments to be informed by his passions and personal tastes, he is positively invigorating. His tart reassessment of Sylvia Plath starts the hand reaching for the poems. His *mot* on the late work of Berryman is the stroke of the matador's blade: "It was as if the lurid determinism that Berryman fulfilled in suicide made him kill the language before he killed himself." Jarrell could not have said it better.

It would appear that I'm arguing for the brio of the reviewer as against the more considered speculations of the academic essayist. Yes, but only on stylistic grounds. I refuse to believe that prose of the latter sort has to be unreadable before it can be good. Donoghue's perceptions on Moore and others seem to me no whit inferior to his more dutiful meanderings. In fact, I would say that they are superior. They represent that part of Donoghue's America worth visiting.

SVEN BIRKERTS

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BACK TO THE FUTURE

MOSCOW 2042. By Vladimir Voinovich. Translated from the Russian by Richard Lourie. Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich. $16.95.

Some sixteen years ago, when Vladimir Voinovich was still living in Moscow, a Polish journalist inquired about his credo as a writer. "To be myself," he answered, "at all costs." Expressed by an American that sort of determination might seem unremarkable, even jejune; for a Soviet writer it has always been the most sober and difficult of resolves. Voinovich—who describes himself as "a completely apolitical person"—succeeded so well that he had not been published in the Soviet Union from that time until last year, when the wholesale repatriation of Russian literature under the banner of *glasnost* moved into high gear. In the midseventies, his saga of the heroically simple Private Chonkin, a latter-day descendant of the Russian folk character Ivan the Fool (*The Life and Extraordinary Adventures of Private Ivan Chonkin* and *Pretender to the Throne*, Farrar, Straus & Giroux: 1977; 1979) began to appear in the West, and in 1980 the author himself took up residence in West Germany. Stripped of his citizenship the following year for "slandering the Soviet state," Voinovich returned to Moscow in the only way then currently open to him: via a Lufthansa time machine, in the guise of one Vitaly Kartsev.

Moscow 2042, the account of Kartsev's round-trip from Munich in 1982 to a Moscow sixty years in the future, extends the great tradition of Russian satirical fiction that begins with Gogol and includes, in this century, Zamyatin, Zoshchenko, Platonov, Bulgakov, and Zinoviev. A fiercely ironic anti-utopia that ranks with Zamyatin's *We* and Zinoviev's *The Yawning Heights*, it nonetheless manages to accommodate a genial humaneness missing in them. Voinovich's real peers are the others I have named, writers whose transcendent comic sense, though it may

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fuel satire, ultimately their works with a *sui generis* poetry charged with mystery and gravity. Like them, he manages at the same time to expose and re-prove the magic of words and the power of fictions.

Voinovich came to literature after serving as a *kolkhoznik*, a soldier, and a carpenter. He has disclaimed ever being an intellectual or a dissident, and has avoided "positions" in favor of a stance summed up in the title of an early story, "I Want to Be Honest." As author he is an *eiron* who regularly takes "a natural man" (the phrase is his) as hero and touchstone. Thus in *Pretender to the Throne* he reflects on his protagonist in crisis: "What could he say in his own defense? That he was still young and hadn't seen life yet, that he had not yet enjoyed enough food or water or freedom or lovemaking. He had no sense that he was a miracle unique in nature, that a whole world would die with him."

Kartsev, the narrator and protagonist of *Moscow 2042*, is a middle-aged variation on this central type, a former Soviet writer now living (as Voinovich does) in Stockdorf, outside Munich. An averagely sensual Russian with a weakness for alcohol and women, he is essentially decent, largely passive, and constantly acted on by a burgeoning cast of devious manipulators and dangerous lunatics. This novel, billed on the dust jacket as a parody of Orwell's *1984*, could be seen with equal justice as a travesty of Gogol's "The Nose"—a grotesque and unsettling dream presented as waking experience.

Voinovich's technique is one of extrapolation from the present—or at least from the very recent past. (For a nonfictional view of that recent past—and of the author himself—readers should consult the first half of his 1986 collection *The Anti-Soviet Soviet Union.*) Every aspect of Soviet life is carried to its nightmarishly logical extreme, and none is omitted from this grim and hilarious dystopia where, in return for mandatory donations of "secondary matter" (feces), citizens receive everything to satisfy their "established needs"—as calculated by the government. ("Why," Lieutenant-General Smerchev of the Literary Service explains, "should a person determine his own needs? He may not have sufficient preparation for this.") Journalism, education and literature have been rationalized. *Pravda* is printed on perforated rolls. In the kindergartens, "the pupils' denunciations are

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viewed only as a game; no weight or significance is attached to them, with the exception of those cases in which children uncover serious plots." Literature has long since abandoned Socialist realism for the only correct method, "communist realism," and now consists of two kinds, Paplit (propaganda, printed on paper), and Paplesslit (works typed on word processor keyboards connected to nothing, thus obviating the need for censorship). SECO, the state security organization, is staffed entirely by CIA agents and vice versa. (When Kartsev asks why the infiltrators are not rooted out, he is told: "Don't you see? If our army smashed SECO, the Americans would respond by smashing their CIA, which is entirely staffed by SECO people, and that wouldn't serve any purpose of ours.") Closet monarchists—"hidden Simites"—are everywhere. "In this country," Kartsev is told confidentially, "nobody knows who he really is anymore."

Central to Voinovich's character-drawing is the caricaturist's strategy of exaggerating key traits and tendencies, and he pursues it here with that liberating indifference to good taste which characterizes both dreams and great comic writing. A key example is his travesty of Solzhenitsyn in the person of Sim Simych Karnavalov—a bearded former *zek* hailed by Moscow talent-spotters in the early 1960s as "another Leonardo da Vinci," now exiled and issuing regular installments ("slabs") of a novel in sixty projected volumes called *The Greater Zone* (labor camps being, in his definition, "the little zone"). Karnavalov's idiosyncratic neologisms, dialectisms, and archaisms are an inevitable casualty even of Richard Lourie's resourceful translation, but the satiric thrust of the portrait comes across clearly enough—as in this exchange from a television interview, conducted in 1982 at Karnavalov's estate somewhere north of Toronto:

> Interviewer: "Mr. Karnavalov, everyone knows that you have millions of readers. But there are people who don't read your books..." "It's not that they don't read them," says Simych with a frown, "it's that they don't finish them. And others lie, saying they have when they haven't."

The ambitions of Karnavalov—who plans to have himself frozen, along with two bodyguards and his white horse Logos, to be stored in a Swiss bank vault against the time when the com-

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munist system collapses so that he can be thawed and ride into Moscow to assume power—constitute one of the poles between which Kartsev is buffeted throughout the novel. The other is that of "the Genialissimo," who hovers over the Soviet Union of 2042 in a space vehicle. Having engineered the Great August Communist Revolution and taken to conducting inspections from space, he is marooned there by the successors of the KGB who decide "to divide power into the heavenly and the earthly."

The country itself is now "an entirely socialist landmass with a communist core"—"the Moscowrep"—the result of the Great August Communist Revolution which declared communism in one walled city. Kartsev finds a Red Square without St. Basil's Cathedral, Lenin's Tomb, or the monument to Minin and Pozharsky, all these things having been sold to the Americans "either by the Corruptionists or the Reformists." On the other hand, Pushkin Square has been renamed "Square of the Genialissimo's Literary Gifts" and Gorky Street "Avenue of the First Volume of the Genialissimo's Collected Works" (there are twenty-six such avenues altogether, one for each volume—not to mention side streets like "Afterword to the First Volume Lane"). The popular Aragvi restaurant is now a Palace of Love, "The N.K. Krupskaya Experimental Order-of-Lenin Brothel" (also known as the Krupstatexordlenbroth), with sayings of the Genialissimo and pictures of the administrators on the walls, but no girls: it operates only on a self-service basis.

Welcomed as a classic of the past (who can be studied but not read), and shown around by officials with names like Horizon Timofeevich and Beria Ilich, Kartsev learns, "There is no political system whatever in our country...[which] is the first in history, the first of all mankind, to have built a classless and systemless communist society." The Party, he discovers, has merged with the KGB to form the KPGB, which in its turn has established "The Communist Reformed Church," headed by one Father Starsky, a "major general in the religious service," who wears a cassock, leads the faithful in making the sign of the star, and proclaims, "God absolutely does not exist, never did and never will. There is only the Genialissimo who is there on high."

Irresistible as the impulse is to cite satiric highlights, it carries the risk of misrepresenting this extraordinary book by slight-

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slighting its less excerptable—and more properly novelistic—features: the framing power of its ingenious postmodernist design, the modulations of its dialogue, and the exemplary character of Kartsev himself, so apparently simple, so alone in his stubborn sanity and beleaguered independence. In the Kremlin he is shown a copy of Moscow 2042 and asked to change it; the communists of 2042 want a different ending from the one that threatens them. Kartsev, of course, can have no recollection of the book. As he points out, he has yet to live in 1987, and will write it only after returning to his starting-point in the world of 1982. Once he has, when the manuscript is nearly complete, an emissary arrives from Toronto demanding that Karnavalov be deleted entirely, lest the book play into the hands of the Soviet "predators"—who "might even decide to publish it in a mass edition."

Voinovich's plot recurs constantly to the hyperbolic importance that Russians of virtually every stripe ascribe to literature. The closing lines, after reporting Kartsev's refusal to change anything, let us hear Voinovich's own voice surfacing through that of his character to express the satirist's ultimate, modestly utopian dream:

> Meanwhile I was thinking, But what if the predators read what I've written here, meet in secret session, discuss my novel thoroughly, and admit that in some ways the author might be right? Maybe they'll decide that if they don't turn from this predatory path, don't correct the existing situation, they'll inevitably reach a pass where the difference between primary and secondary matter ceases to exist. And, reaching that sad conclusion, they will set about making corrections, not in the author or his work, but in life itself. And then my novel will be taken from the safe and published in a mass edition as the product of an idle, inoffensive imagination.Well, personally speaking, I could not object to that turn of events. May the reality of the future not resemble the one I describe here. Of course, in that event, my reputation for exceptional honesty will suffer some damage, but that I'm willing to accept. To hell with my reputation. As long as life's a little easier on people.
>
> And that, ladies and gentlemen, is the whole point.

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When *Moscow 2042* came out, comment on this passage seemed superfluous. No longer: events have overtaken the book in quite unforeseeable ways, complicating its final ironies and lending them a new dimension. Astonishing "corrections" to what seemed a hopelessly calcified system have in fact taken place, particularly in the area of ideology. Phrases like "universal human values," rejected for half a century as "bourgeois," now turn up daily in the Soviet press. Orthodox priests can be seen regularly on television, and the Church, basking in official approval, offers itself as a moral alternative to the communist regime. Censorship has atrophied; the historical record is being restored on a broad scale; plain speaking has reached epidemic proportions.

So, for the moment at least, a number of Voinovich's main targets seem to have largely disappeared—or been preempted. In the longer run, however, that is hardly likely to damage his reputation.

DONALD FANGER

GENUS GENIUS

GENIUSES TOGETHER: AMERICAN WRITERS IN PARIS IN THE 1920S. By Humphrey Carpenter. Houghton Mifflin Co..$18.95.

Most of us who have tried to bring great men and women back to life lack the talent of our chosen subjects; one does wish that one could write about Flaubert with Flaubert's skill. But does the historian who has set out to recreate the atmosphere of the Lost Generation have to go so far as to borrow (and to bend) the title of one of their books of memoirs for his own? For the title *Geniuses Together*, is adapted, with due acknowledgement, from *Being Geniuses Together*, which is what Robert McAlmon call his own recollection of Paris in the 1920s. A depressing precedent. Why not "Paris Was Their Mistress," from Samuel Putnam's *Paris Was Our Mistress,* or even "A No-Longer-Moveable

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Feast"? Carpenter's choice of a title only serves to underline the twice-told quality of this anecdotal account of what was, granted, an anecdotal event, the establishment of an American colony on the Left Bank in the decade following the First World War.

For they had come to write, or to learn to write, and to publish when possible, in a town which promised fun and cheap drinks. When they departed they left almost nothing behind them; the reader (not to speak of the writer) of any history of the Lost Generation must be struck by the discovery that one must leave Paris in order to learn something about it, for the raw materials are in library stacks and manuscript collections back home in the States. The present reviewer is keenly aware of this paradox, for he has been asked more than once to write about the Americans of Paris *from* Paris, and has had to say that it cannot be done. Humphrey Carpenter tells us that he worked in Paris when not at the Bodleian Library near his Oxford home; one wonders why. For the best of the Lost seemed to have put all of their Paris into their memoirs, or into gushy first-time-tourist letters home.

Still, Carpenter brings to this shopworn subject something it lacked—clean style. He also has the advantage of distance, both in historical time and in his quality of British subject; he is a published and praised biographer (of W.H. Auden, J.R.R. Tolkien); surely no more elegant and orderly account of the subject will be published, or should even be necessary. To help make this the definitive account, its author has provided absorbing if not quite relevant historical background on the association of Americans with Paris from the time of Benjamin Franklin, together with some general information on the Latin Quarter as the French lived in it before the invasion of the Americans. He introduces Henry James, who was attracted to Paris by "the sense of being in a denser civilization than our own." James came and went—to England, which was more like what he knew. "Life at home has the compensation that there you are a part of the civilization," explained James, "whereas here [in Paris] you are outside it. It's a choice of advantages." Unlike the Americans of the between-the-wars decades, James actually cared about French culture and French authors, and sought them out. The Americans of the 1920s were drawn less by denser civilization than by cheaper francs.

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But first there were the pioneers, *pre*-Lost Generation Americans who provided an infrastructure and occasionally a roof for later visitors. Forget rich man's daughter Natalie Barney; she and her salon on the Rue Jacob have provided us with some good stories but little literature. A few minutes away on Rue de Fleurus, Gertrude Stein was another free spirit, but she had a mission (or several), and it was what she was writing and saying about writing that attracted Sherwood Anderson before he even knew how good a hostess she could be. Bookseller Sylvia Beach was another permanent resident, another woman who could indulge her lifestyle in this city where no questions were asked (especially not of foreigners), and we all know how her cheerful philanthropy at the sign of Shakespeare & Company put James Joyce on the track and relieved so many American visitors of momentary material distress. The most influential literary personality among the permanents was surely Ezra Pound, whose own European adventures had begun in London before the war; his peers were Joyce, T.S. Eliot; in retrospect he seems almost too lofty to have been of practical help to the dozen or so minor writers whom Humphrey Carpenter places at center stage.

The Lost Generation—Gertrude Stein found the term—refers not to any of the aforementioned but to Ernest Hemingway, and to Hemingway's drinking and travelling companions. No need to scrutinize holograph texts and correspondence to write a book about them, for as we have indicated they told us more than we need to know in their touching and occasionally tiresome account of who outdrank whom, who punched whom,—where and when and, whether we care or not, why. Following them around Montparnasse might be fun for readers with time on their hands, and Carpenter's publisher provides a map of Lost Generation Paris in the endpapers (a disappointingly incomplete one, considering the mass of data provided by Humphrey himself inside the book). The Lost Generation will surely stand or fall with the reputation of Hemingway, and we all know that this reputation has risen and fallen more than once in our time. F. Scott Fitzgerald flashes by, but he wasn't really part of Papa's crowd (he and Zelda are more like affluent tourists who keep a Paris flat). Sherwood Anderson had his Paris back in Chicago, and when he arrived on the Left Bank he was almost a veteran, at the very least a published writer. But look at William Bird, who

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printed one of Hemingway's first books on his own Paris press; look at Malcolm Cowley. The brief biographical notes which Carpenter provides at the end of the volume include the information that Cowley "punched the proprietor of the Rotonde in the jaw, and wrote *Exile's Return* (1934) about the Lost Generation." Then Harold Loeb, who edited a little mag and served as model for Robert Cohn in *The Sun Also Rises.* Or poet Robert McAlmon, who typed for Joyce and self-published his work before setting up an imprint to do Hemingway and fellow Paris Americans; he told his version of the story in *Being Geniuses Together.* But isn't that where we came in?

HERBERT R. LOTTMAN

MORAL GEOGRAPHY

THE EMBARRASSMENT OF RICHES: AN INTERPRETATION OF DUTCH CULTURE IN THE GOLDEN AGE. By Simon Schama. Alfred A. Knopf $39.95

Culture means *things*, first of all, and how a given people view them and use them: popular manners. "When I write of culture I don't mean Culture," says Schama, making a lot of the lowercase, and there is little here about theater or poetry or music. In a modern city he would visit the supermarket, not the art gallery or the opera house, and this book is like a supermarket of seventeenth-century habits of mind or what he calls "moral geography." A British historian of lively mind now at Harvard University, he has elaborately recreated the world behind Dutch painting in its golden age. This is not art history, and though the book has 314 illustrations, all black and white, mainly from little masters of the age, and they illustrate the text, for once, and are not illustrated by it. This is a picture of a living world: prisons and voyages, myths and household habits, especially cleanliness, sex and marriage, children, midwifery, homosexuality and prostitution.

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Carefully divided into chapters as it is, the book still reads like a deluge of information in an ebullient style—an emblem of itself, since Schama's overriding thesis is that, for a century and more after its liberation from Spain, the Dutch found in the overflooding of their land a metaphor for the luxury and superabundance of their economy. As he remarks, they fought the sea and Spain at the same time, and sometimes fought the Spaniards with the sea, releasing ocean waves on the shore to relieve the siege of Leiden. The book, though very long and often garrulous, can be brisk. Schama is dismissive, first and last, of the term "bourgeois" and the misleading Victorian baggage the word still carries with it—safe and conventional—and rightly prefers "civic" to sum up the virtues of the new republic. There is nothing unheroic or cozy, as he says, about fighting back the sea or defeating an empire—especially if you are doing both at the same time.

Such a topic is easily vulnerable to overdetermination, and Schama fights off the danger as heroically as any Dutch burgher faced with a collapsing dike. There is nothing inevitable, he argues, about the rise of the Dutch republic. The Dutch might easily have lost the war against Spain in the sixteenth century, just as Americans might have lost the war against England two centuries later. Or they might have settled for less than national sovereignty: in fact it was only after nearly twenty years of war that they began even to claim sovereignty. Nor is Calvinism allowed to tyrannize the debate. Indeed this is a book that often hints at mysteries in Dutch history, in the sense of unanswered questions of great moment of a kind that Rembrandt scholarship is notoriously full of. Archives can tell so much, but they seldom tell the historian what he most wants to know.

It is not even clear, as Schama remarks, whether most Dutchmen were Calvinists in the seventeenth century, though the religion had a dominating role in the new state. It is certainly probable that over a third of the nation was, as it still is, Roman Catholic. Jan Steen and Vermeer were Catholic painters, in any case—Vermeer by conversion—so that any suggestion that Dutch painting is Protestant in general or Calvinist in particular is plainly imprudent. This is a state that did not even want to be that, its local loyalties always remaining fierce. For all that, the Dutch republic was tolerant. It allowed remarkable liberty to the Jews, as the book shows, and offices of state could be held by non-

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Calvinists prepared to make a highly formal declaration in favor of the state religion while still covertly practicing their own. The book is as cautious in theory-making as it is uninhibited in style, and it does not leave itself open to the familiar objection that much that is claimed for Dutch painting as an effect of the Reformation could be claimed for the art of Catholic Europe too. There are no easy answers here, of a general sort: not Calvinism, not sea-flooding, not nationalism, and not language, which the Dutch share across a southern frontier with Antwerp and Ghent. The Netherlands was what it was, as a space on the map, and is what it is, because it was as much as the Dutch could free from Spain down to the Twelve Years' Truce of 1609, and as much as they could keep at the final Treaty of Münster in 1648. The Dutch are Dutch because they are Dutch. It is a land unified and defined neither by language nor by religion.

By culture, then, or popular manners. And here the book turns into a whimsical romp, its documentation shoved to the end. Whimsy is attractive in itself. It is also an important ideological tactic of the historian in a post-utopian age like the 1980s, and the book breathes an air of detachment, even skepticism, so natural that one suspects the author has long since abandoned all prospect of anything else. It is not the truth-content of propositions that interests him, but the fact that some three centuries ago Dutchmen thought and believed them. It is only with a start that one realizes that they may have thought something because it was true. An excess of luxury can endanger the moral life, after all. If epics of shipwreck "emphasized the suddenness of catastrophe even when fortunes seemed brightest," as he puts it, it may be that they did so because shipwrecks, like car crashes, really are like that. The tone is amused, anthropological, gay. Schama is always in control of his concepts: mentalities and moral geographies, one feels, can be wildly amusing after three hundred years, and are seldom anything else. Only in the prelude on the heroic struggle against Spain and in the chapter on the tolerance of minorities do we hear a hint of what Holland has given to the world that is

The book justly ends with a conclusion in which nothing is concluded—unless the proposition that all general conclusions, in this matter, are risky or false. "If there is one Dutch culture," Schama remarks, "there are many rooms within it." The last

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word he modestly gives to Henry James, who often serves nowadays as a pompous intelligence to whose intelligence (and pomp) one is too humble to aspire oneself. "All these elements," says James, "give one's regular habits of thought the stimulus of a little confusion, and make one feel that one is dealing with an original genius." That is rather what the book itself does. If the reader is sometimes embarrassed by the riches of its detail, the author plainly never is. It is a book which, though heavy to lift and hard to master at a single reading, gives us the picture behind the pictures. No one will ever walk through the Dutch room of his national gallery again with unaltered eyes.

A final word of praise for the generous and striking design of the book by Iris Weinstein and Julie Duquet. It is printed in Percepta, a film version of Eric Gill's Perpetua, its inner margins wider than its outer, its plentiful illustrations—no easy matter, one imagines—well integrated with the text.

GEORGE WATSON

THREE NEW POETS

ABOVE THE LAND. By Julie Agoos. Foreword by James Merrill.
Yale University Press. $13.95
THE CLASP AND OTHER POEMS. By Michael Collier.
Wesleyan University Press. $16.00.
THE SQUANICOOK ECLOGUES. By Melissa Green.
W.W.Norton Co.. $13.95.

The obvious truth about recent poetry has been its traditionalism, a traditionalism that seems to incorporate more than refute the experiments of modernism. Even the surrealisms of Trakl and Neruda, so dominant in the seventies, seem to have been swallowed and digested. Though something like the old *vers libre* still flourishes, there is a keen sense that, whether or not a poem is "formal," a poet must negotiate the demands of form, taking into account the necessary limits which make invention possible in the first place.

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In *Above the Land,* which was selected by James Merrill for the Yale Series of Younger Poets in 1987, Julie Agoos writes with an acute awareness of form. But this hardly means her poems are restrained. In fact, one senses in her poems about Italy, which make up a fair portion of the book, an exuberance not unlike Forster's in *A Room with a View.* Her portraits of Italian life crackle on the page, as do her descriptions of locale, as in "Porto Venere," where she writes:

> We admire the narrow
> houses that blush
> in each quick blade
> of sunlight: how
> they crowd against the hillside
> pale orange
> and grey and pink
> and straight black lines,
> like delicate drawings
> on fieldmaps.

One misses here the sense of *paysage moralisé,* of landscape transmogrified into a spiritual condition, as in Auden's "In Praise of Limestone," where his Italian island becomes tantamount to a portrait of the soul; still, Agoos is refreshingly in control of her material and her fairly modest aims are well satisfied.

In several poems in the second section, which is "about" her experience of living in Italy, Agoos swishes back and forth between English and Italian. This is risky, but it usually works quite well, as in "An Afternoon's Activity," where she uses the Italian as a metaphor for poetry itself, for language in the process of connecting to the world, of gathering a world unto itself.

The non-Italian poems, which make up the first and third sections, are autobiographical, often set in New England. Agoos has a fine ear, and her best poems, such as "Making History," "Lunar Eclipse at a New England Funeral," and "Preparing to Move," are resonant. The latter, for instance, opens:

> For a long time, we sit
> at home and watch the evening

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fall on the brick in the backyard,

the plum-colored shade of the round
table full of holes
dropping its disks of light

onto the anthills.

Agoos has the courage to write plainly, as in the above passage, but the writing is never dull. Her language is simple, sensuous, and concrete, with a quiet lyricism that approaches radiance in her best work.

Michael Collier writes in the tradition of "gentle" poetry one associates with Herbert, cultivating a quiet voice which nevertheless understands that "the price of pain / is pain," as he says in the opening poem, "Ancestors." In *The Clasp,* his first volume, he explores diverse emotional and geographical landscapes, arguing over and again in different ways that we are "connected by desire, / the common kind, as in being one with your blood." Whether writing about his grandfather's death in "Elegy" or recalling his father's experience of war in "The Point of No Return," he exudes affection, an affection that spills over to a love of objects, natural and artificial, as in the poise of "Aquarium," where he contemplates "Blue scuba tanks striped with yellow" as well as the woman who moves through the water, wiping the glass and cleaning the "fake coral with a long boot brush."

Reading "Aquarium," I was reminded of Julio Cortázar's "Axolotl," the story about a man so obsessed with strange creatures in a fish tank that, in the end, he becomes one of them. In *The Clasp,* Collier is similarly obsessed with transformations, disappearances, and recurrences, as in the haunting "Eyepiece," which concludes:

In a few weeks
I was too sullen to live with,
and like the moon
that disappeared from the eyepiece
at my neighbor's house
we couldn't be restored.

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Those neighbors disappeared
from the block because of divorce:
how we all disappear under a moon
which my roommate said
hangs high in every neighborhood.

There is sadness in the fact that "we couldn't be restored." Indeed, melancholy informs much of this exquisite book, the title poem of which ("The Clasp") is particularly fine. It's about a string of pearls, clasped shut in the poem by the somnambulant poet. The pearls become otherworldly as the poet contemplates their origin, which of course recalls their end: But I have only

the tiny adder's head
clasp staring at me, whose coiled
body is a string of blue kelp, all
bladder and beads, and if I opened
the mouth of what I've lulled asleep,
the viper, on waking, might strike
what it first sees: me, its tail.

The four sequences that make up *The Squanicook Eclogues* by Melissa Green are poised and accomplished. The first sequence, from which the book takes its title, resurrects a lost world that seems almost Pre-Raphaelite in its particularity. The first poem, "April," opens with this:

After a blustery, fretful March, the fields have yawned,
tossing off their goosedown coverlets to thaw.
In airing upstairs farmhouse rooms, the sunlight paints
A sudden gold-leaf on the dresser drawers and wall.
In his oldest jacket, I wade the oxen road,
And under my boots, a gingery leaf-fall breeds new growth
Beside the crooked stone fence bordering two states.

Her first sequence affects the casualness of a notebook, but there is finally nothing casual in its design. As we follow the poet-daughter throught the seasons of a New England year beside

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her dying father, the natural world described becomes increasingly metaphorical, as in "January," which ends:

> He tried to show
> Me where a red-eyed vireo might nest, the shy
> Elusive whippoorwill might hide, but I could not
> Distinguish anything except the wildest note
> Of pity in their singing.

Green understands Emerson's famous injunction to "cast one's thought upon the object." Her grief is subtly embodied, made palpable in the concreteness of a world that "lies ruptured at the root."

These are dense poems, full of an acute sense of history. In "Last Year's Snow," a man finds himself engulfed in hallucinations of snow, surrounded and weighed down by an outer weather that becomes, in the end, an inner weather—a blizzard with "shards of ice falling / for days across the shaken globe." In "Attic Bird," Green pierces the layers of a young woman's mind as she plies her way through the diaries and effects of her grandmother in her grandmother's attic. In the final sequence, "The Housewright's Mercy," she explores the nature of work, of building and maintaining a home, a life. The concluding poem in this last sequence (which is tightly rhymed in well-hammered pentameter), has a Roethkean lilt rarely attempted by contemporary poets, who seem to prize flatness:

> Who knows what heaven is? Or if we're left
> With Joseph shouldering his ax, the girth
> Of ringed infinity's elm—to try and glimpse
> through darkness Martha's incandescent lamps.
> Does broken Carthage most resemble death,
> or do those workmen on the roof who lift
> a horizontal beam, stripped to the waist,
> still forge the final crosspiece of the West?

Anyone testing the waters of contemporary poetry in this country would do well to start with these three young poets, all of whom display a sturdy sense of tradition. They have, in their

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very different manners, been unafraid to write plainly; they cast, with their bravery, their inventiveness and craft, a powerful light into the future.

JAY PARINI

KNOWING AND LOVING

THE ANATOMY OF LOVING: THE STORY OF MAN'S QUEST TO KNOW WHAT LOVE IS. By Martin S. Bergmann. Columbia University Press. $35.00.

This tome, modest in size considering its subject matter, surveys the terrain of love. Since Freudian psychoanalysis is both the lens through which the surveyor looks and also part of the territory surveyed, the perspectives afforded the reader are at once specialized and rich.

The refractions built into this unusual methodology are themselves of interest. Curious goings-on present themselves in the clash between title and subtitle where the quest to know what love is is equated with loving and anatomy with story. Of the first equation, a central paradox is unwittingly engaged: the relation of loving to knowing. Knowing, of course, may mean carnal possession, but it may also be its antithesis. Love is both an emotion which seizes hold from inside, a source of bliss or suffering, and an entity that exists outside to be seized, the vulnerable object of an attempt to know what it is.

Man sees himself alternately in thrall to love or in the position of nonparticipatory investigator. One version of this opposition is the suffering, idealizing troubadours and Freud's Leonardo; another the arrow-struck, helpless female and the mastering male. Investigation of love loosens the sometimes death-like grip of love on other endeavor. One cannot be con-

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sumed by love and an authority on the subject at the same time. This is the caution within the tale of Cupid and Psyche, as Bergmann remarks. Psychoanalysis recognizes this fact in its requirement that transference love be analyzed, a call to replace desire by knowledge of its provenance and impossibility. Knowing is loving and a substitute for loving. To anatomize is not to narrate a tale. This story is a hard one to write.

The author elaborates these themes with verve and insight, if not always with steady organization or rigorous method. The roles he assigns himself of historian, taxonomist, and analyst do not always complement each other, but they yield creative dividends nonetheless. The unorthodox organization of the book reflects the author's identification with Freud, Rank, and others as informed, European *amateurs* of culture in general and as psychoanalysts. As such, the first half, in particular, is something of an anomaly. It is not a work of academic scholarship, but a learned appreciation of the pre-Freudian literature on love. Bergmann follows the historical "growth of the vocabulary of love," the Egyptian hieroglyph for the word love, "a hoe, a mouth and a figure of a man with his hand in his mouth," and their use of metaphors about love's sickness; he explicates the seduction (not love) poetry of Sumer, the dual, increasingly subtle and conflict-laden representations in Greek mythology of Aphrodite and Eros, the contributions of Plato— sublimation and original bisexuality—the Greek tragedians with their depiction of intrapsychic conflict, Old and New Testament versions of love, and the idealization of masochistic love in the Middle Ages which culminates in the Romantic *Liebestod.*

He comments as he goes, often from a clinical psychoanalytic perspective. What guides these comments is avowedly what the author judges he can say that is new. Hence historical exposition (telling the story of love)—what Plato brought to the subject of love, for instance—yields to venturing a possible dynamic conflict in Shakespeare (anatomizing love). If such a shift, in the context of a larger historical exposition, is aggravating, the dislocating insight is provocative: Bergmann suggests that Shakespeare is caught by an inability to transcend his self-love. He tries to resolve this dilemma by loving what he once was, though the mirror constantly reminds him that he cannot remain young (Sonnet LXII). The attempted solution is a bisexual

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one. In Sonnet XX he addresses a demand to "the master-mistress of my passion," the "narcissistic part of himself to establish or consolidate a loveless procreating heterosexual union."

Questions of method and evidence aside, Bergmann's nonacademic position makes him free to take such leaps of clinical intuition and liberates him from the tendency of literary critics—surely a remnant of the New Criticism view that the poem resolves its tensions—to find growth and new solutions in the text or to attribute failure to find such solutions to limitations imposed by the genre form. Thus, he does not see the ending of Shakespeare's comedies as representing genuine resolutions. Instead, they make "the unskilled laugh, but...the psychologically judicious grieve."

The second half of the book is an exegesis of the contributions of psychoanalysis to the subject of love. Bergmann leads us through Freud's intricate, dense and sometimes contradictory theories, showing us new perspectives missed because of preconceptions. To take one new insight, while Freud is more closely associated with sexuality than love, Bergmann shows Freud struggling with the question of how the sexual drive becomes love and suggesting in 1915 that loving is "the whole sexual current of feeling." Freud quickly becomes dissatisfied with this view and invites the reader to share his doubts, but Bergmann reminds us that the view that loving "is the whole current of sexual feeling is entirely novel. It is not to be equated with mere sex, but rather connotes that all the sexual wishes have become centered on one person. No other sexual objects are desired, nor is there a yearning for other sexual practices than those that have found expression in the relationship. This may not be a sufficient definition of love, but it is more than an ordinary sexual attraction." He goes on to show that Freud is in the process, clumsily perhaps, of formulating a new theory: "Love is not an instinct; it is the ego...that loves its objects. Libido and love are no longer synonymous. The sexual instinct as such cannot explain the nature of love." However, by 1921, in what Bergmann calls Freud's third theory of love, love is once more made instinct. "What mattered most to Freud was that the link between love and sex should not be lost."

This book is written for analysts and nonanalysts alike. It constitutes a clearly presented historical exposition of the devel-

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opment of Freudian theories of love by a writer who understands those theories clinically rather than only academically and has, indeed, contributed to them. It includes, for instance, a taxonomy of possible love relationships from narcissistic permutations to object-related variations which should be of interest to many. Taken on its own terms, rather than on those of a more familiar, contemporary, academic volume, it is a useful source both of information and creative insight.

GAIL S. REED

THE CLASSICS IN HENRY JAMES

THE BOOK WORLD OF HENRY JAMES: APPROPRIATING THE CLASSICS. By Adeline R. Tintner. UMI Research Press. $49.95.

Adeline Tintner has written an arresting book on a subject which would have daunted lesser critics because of its pitfalls and invitations into blind alleys, both epistemological and semantic. Henry James wrote in his essay on Pierre Loti that "an achievement in art or letters grows more interesting when we begin to perceive its connections." Tintner's book reveals these connections for the first time in James's fiction and shows how, long before "appropriation" became a modern honorific critical term, "throughout his life James made it quite clear to his intimates and readers that his devouring interest in fiction lay in measuring his mind against the works of others and that his pleasure arose from rewriting them in his own way." Tintner uncovers for us his "free rearrangements" of European classics from Shakespeare through Balzac and includes such contemporaries as Flaubert, Pater, Ibsen and Meredith. She makes the point that above all James did not suffer from any "anxiety of influence." As he said, "I take liberties with the greatest." She has reserved his appropriation of the lowest (from fairy-tales to science fiction) for another volume in her series of James's worlds. Though certainly not identical, James's "book world" is coexten-

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sive with the world in which he lived, breathed, and had his being. He probably drew more *vital* sustenance from the written word than any other modern master of comparable stature, Joyce alone excepted.

Tintner did not begin "by looking for the literary models lurking in James's fiction. They sprang out of [her] reading." His appropriation, she believes, is a form of criticism. "The reader cannot say where his fiction ends or his criticism begins," but when James "redoes" another writer whose classic "has been encoded in a James story, a process of extended relations begins that seems to be endless." The astonishing result of Tintner's analyses shows a fantastically varied assortment of models revamped for inclusion as analogies or metaphors within a given tale. *Gulliver's Travels Part IV* is revealed to be the literary analogue written into "Lady Barberina," a tale in which equestrian terms, culture, and names are the net in which James catches with his "caustic wit" the heartless matrimonial market ruthlessly engaged in by American millionaires and English aristocrats. James shows how a "boy's book" by Robert Louis Stevenson could be written into "The Pupil" simply by using the vocabulary from *Treasure Island* as well as the relation between a youth and an older mentor from *Kidnapped.* What happens, ironically, is that James's most honored prototypes (for example, Shakespeare, Balzac, Meredith) are the ones most likely to undergo drastic remodeling. A new and exhilarating freedom emerges whenever such bold liberties are taken. At least some of the premises on which the exemplars were grounded are set aside and replaced with a set of assumptions sufficiently different from—yet still sufficiently close to—those established by the original artists: his true ancestors.

Adeline Tintner's fascinating study attests to James's incredibly large intellectual appetite (matched only by that of Goethe) for appropriating as much of the world's great literature as it is possible for one single author to encompass. The importance of her studies lies in the detailed and heuristic analysis of how this "appetite projects itself" on Milton for James's twin novels, *The Wings of the Dove* and *The Golden Bowl,* on Novalis for "The Blue Flower" in *Roderick Hudson,* and on to Tolstoy and "Le Roman Russe" for *The Awkward Age.*

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Further, her iconographic eye, supported by thirty-six illustrations, hones her argument of how James's invasion of the province of visual art serves as a complement rather than an accessory to the fiction. Here too James stands even more solitary among literary figures. (For a fuller treatment of Henry James's use of the plastic and visual arts in his fiction, see Tintner's earlier book, *The Museum World of Henry James.*) One may quibble over individual examples and wonder at some of his empathies. Yet the sheer breadth of his visual appropriations is commanding: it extends from the Renaissance via the Baroque and Enlightenment periods to such near contemporaries as Maclise and Rodin. Some of Tintner's best pages in the present volume address the functional role certain art works signally dear to James played in the construction of his intricate fictions. It is here, in these subtle interdisciplinary portions of her book, that the author's insight and detective skill show to particular advantage, jolting the reader into frank admiration. The eyes she has opened are not likely to close again for a long time.

FRANCIS GOLFFING

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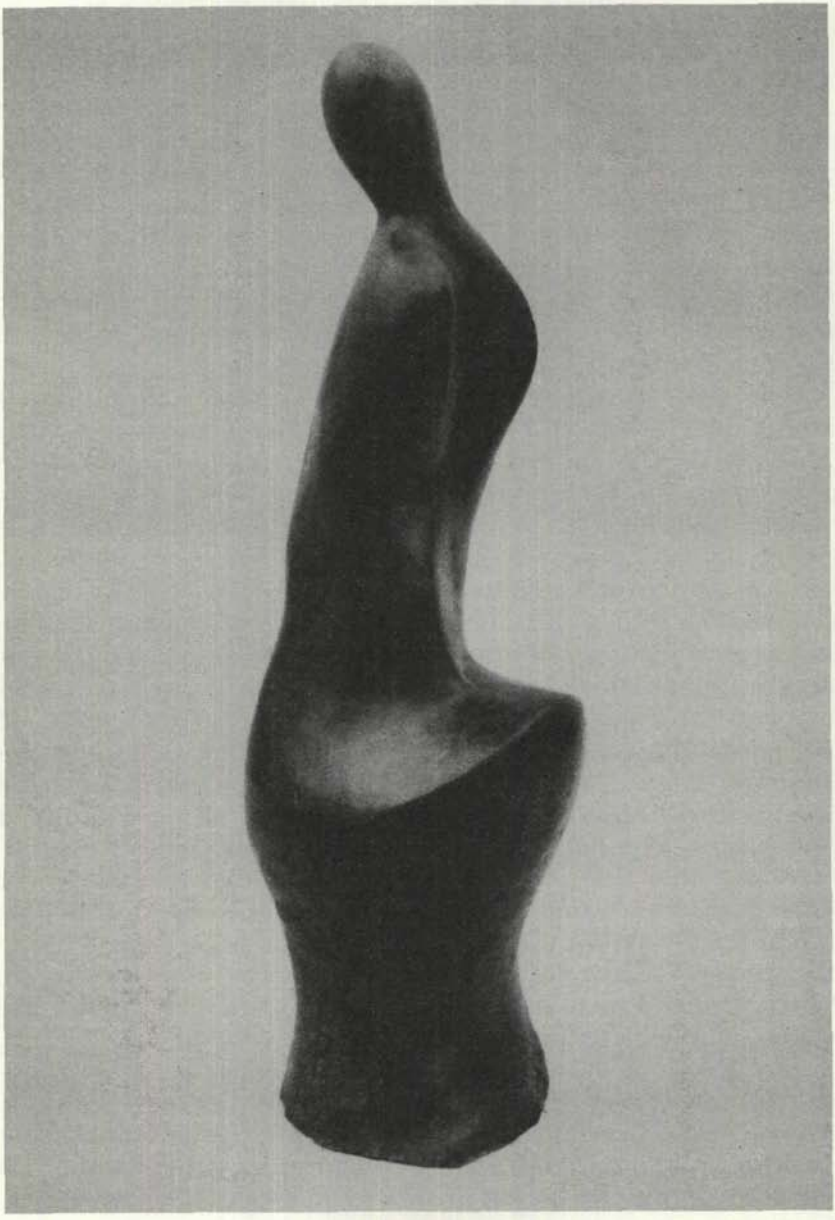

S (1987) by Joel Fisher. Bronze edition of five. 55 and 1/2″ x 18″ x 20″. Collection of Edward R. Downe, Jr. Photo credit Bill Jacobson Studio. Courtesy The Brooklyn Museum.

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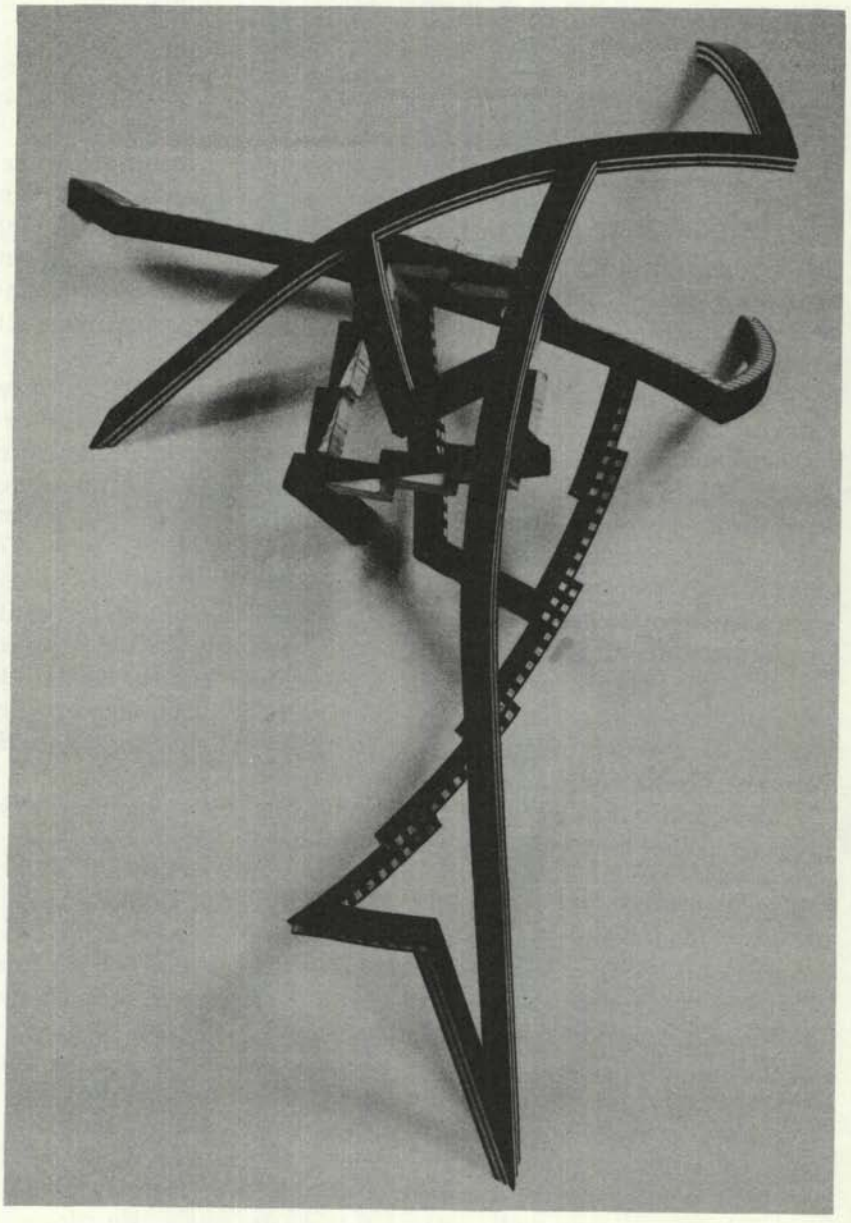

Behind the Cross (1982) by Mel Kendrick. Laminated poplar, plaster, ink. 71 and 1/2″ x 43″ x 21″. Addison Gallery of American Art. Photo credit John Abbot. Courtesy The Brooklyn Museum.

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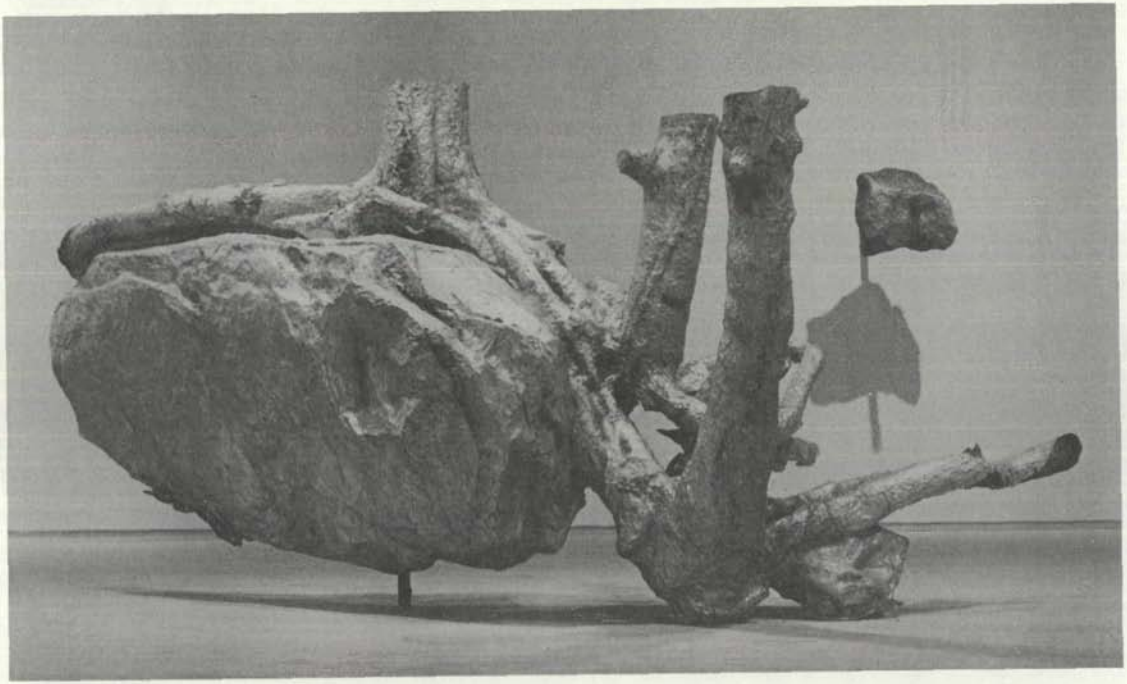

Construction of Salisbury Island (1979) by Robert Lobe. 64 and 1/2″ x 22″ x 46 and 1/2″. Hammered aluminum. Collection of the artist, courtesy of the Blum Helman Gallery. Courtesy The Brooklyn Museum.

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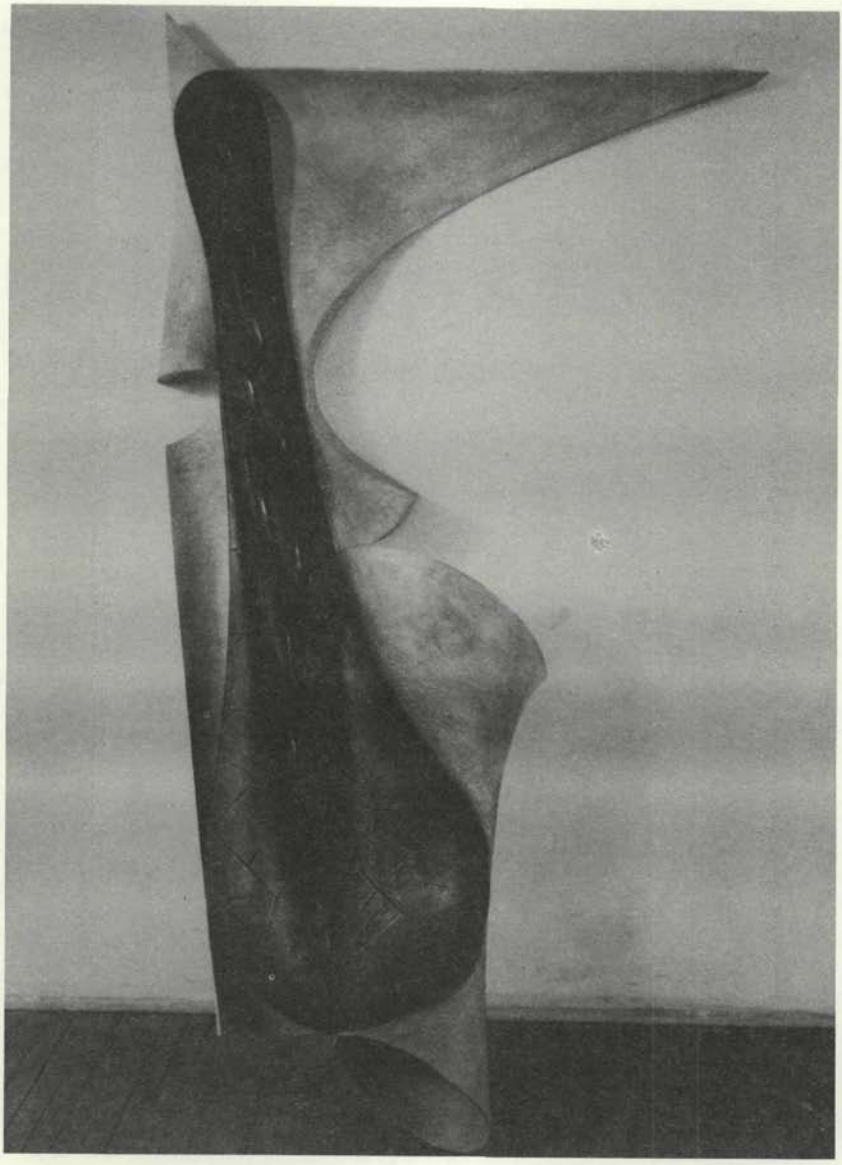

Action at a Distance (*Ghost Version*) (1987) by John Newman. Aluminum and bronze with lacquer and patina. 108″ x 62″ x 32″. Photo credit Palka/Noble Photography. Courtesy The Brooklyn Museum.

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Element #18 (1988) by Siah Armajani. Aluminum, painted steel, pressure-treated wood. 68″ x 142″ x 40″. Courtesy Max Protetch Gallery.

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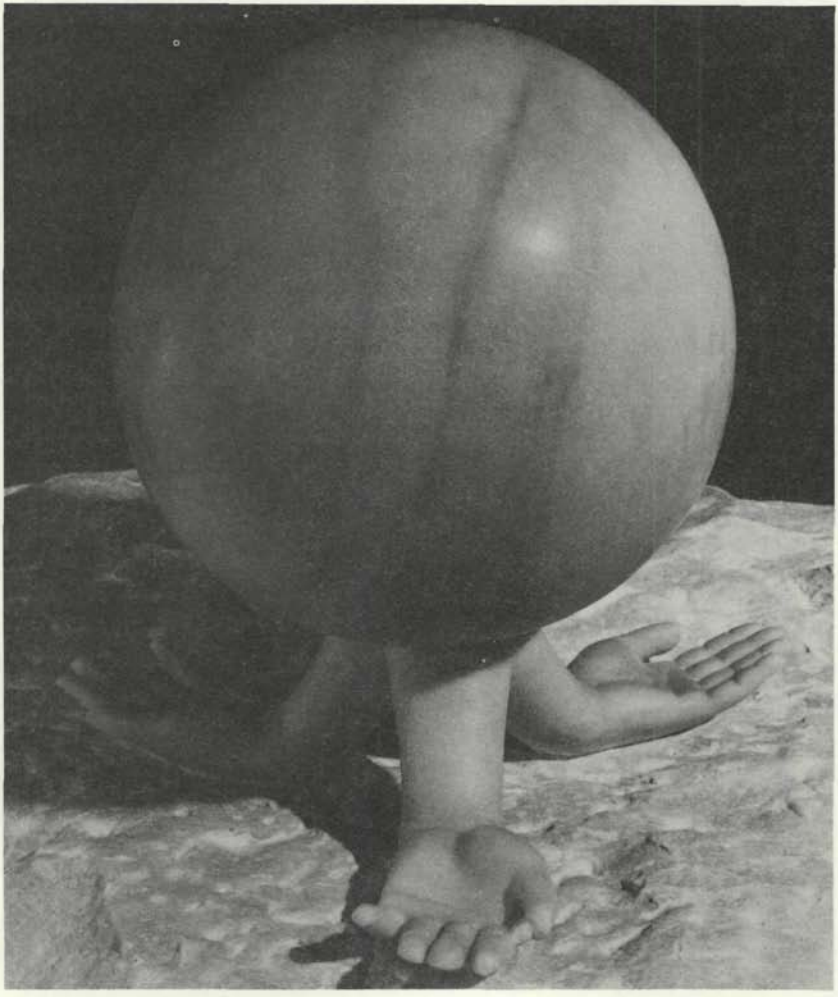

Untitled (With Hands) (1989) by Louise Bourgeois. Pink marble. 35″ x 29″ x 34″. Courtesy Robert Miller Gallery. Photo credit Peter Bellamy.

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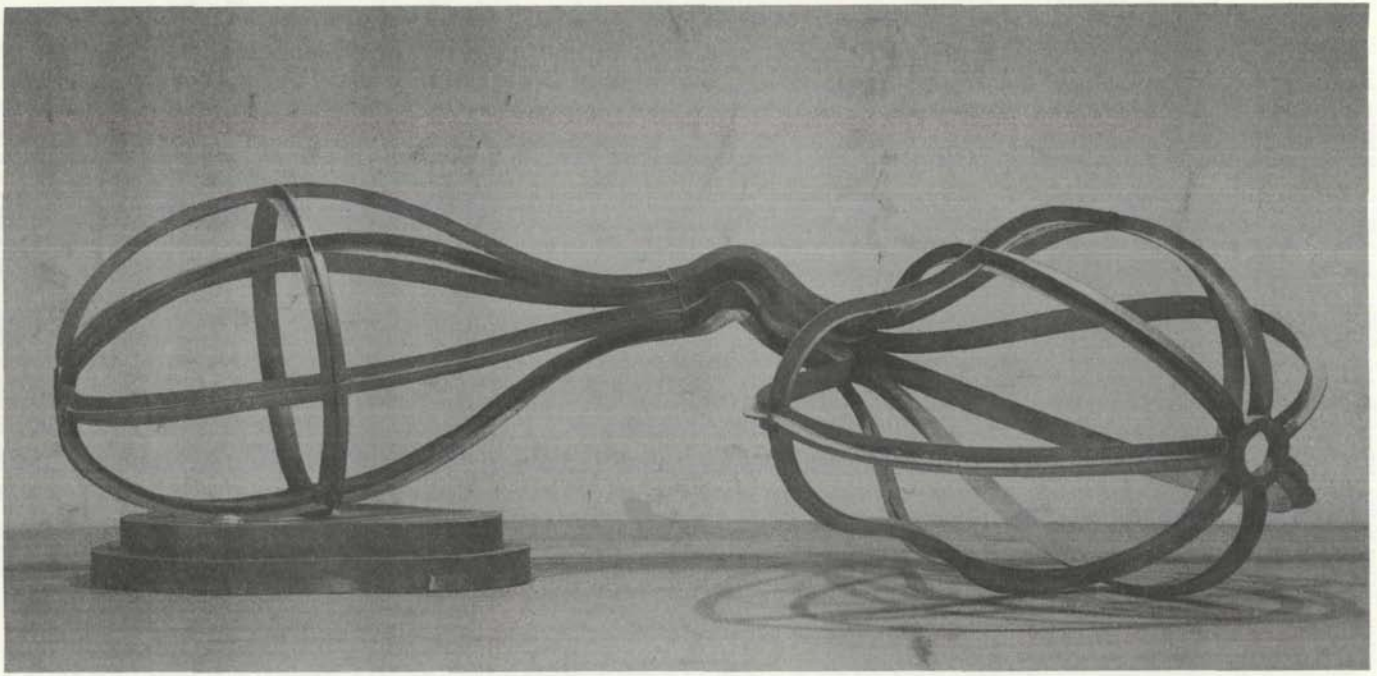

Between the Eyes (model) by Richard Deacon. Scheduled for installation in 1990. Completed dimensions will be 20′ x 60′. Courtesy Art Gallery of Ontario.

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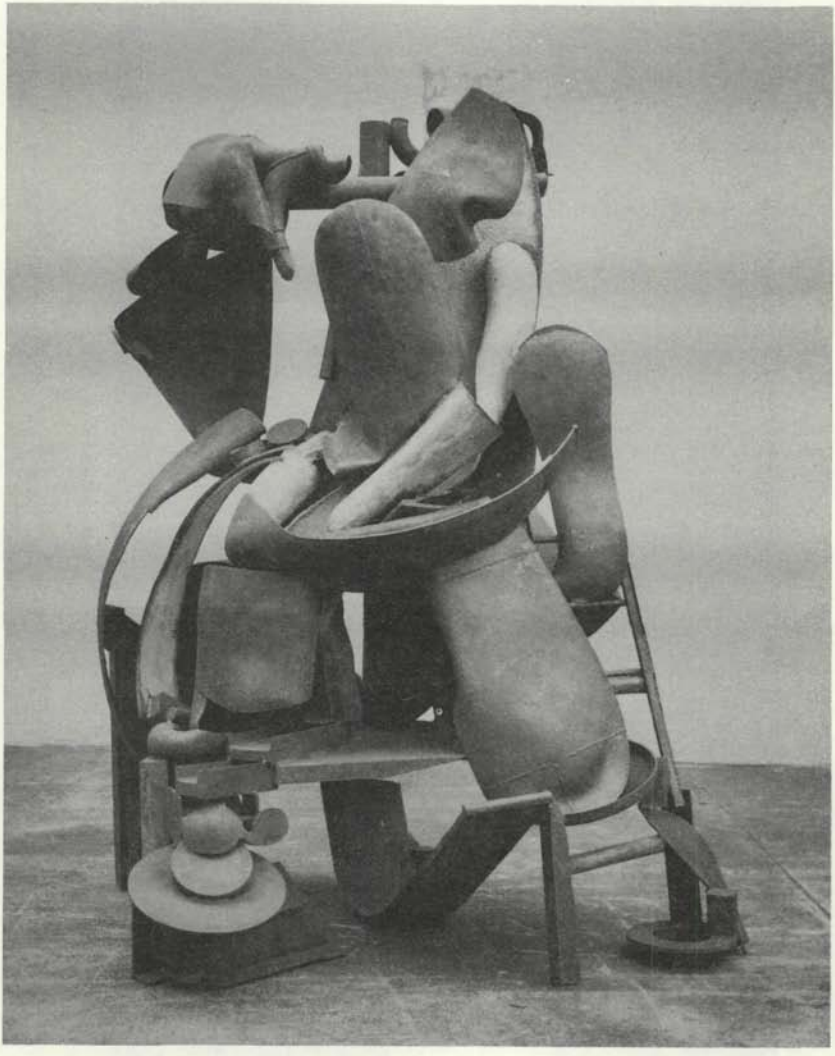

Descent from the Cross (After Rubens) (1987–88) by Anthony Caro. Steel rusted and waxed. 96″ x 73″ x 63″. Courtesy André Emmerich Gallery.

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